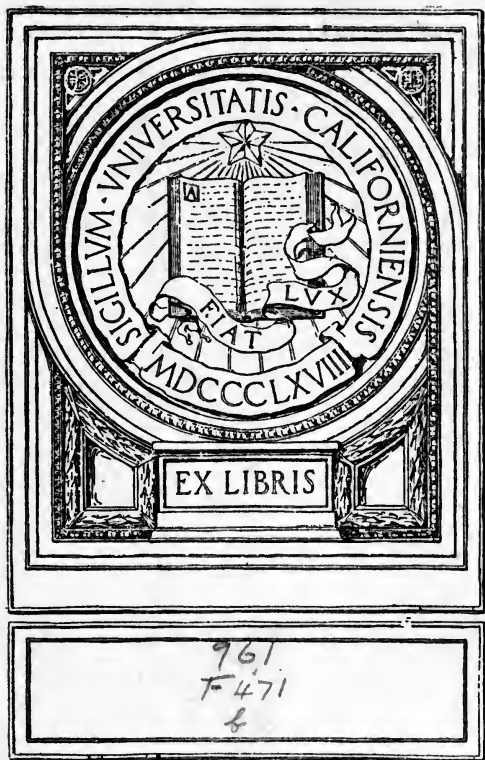




BROKEN

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# BROKEN ARCS

BY  
DARRELL FIGGIS

"On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven,  
a perfect round."—*Abi Vogler*.



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TO  
MY WIFE

You will remember, nearly seven years ago, telling me the fragments of a countryside tale that had come to your ears ; and you will remember as we lay in a secluded lane under a bounty of wildrose, and spoke together of it, how it began to take shape and outline, and how the determination then came to write of it. This is it. Its very familiarity in the thought has given it a coherence belonging rather to its memory than the telling of it. If this be so, then this gives it a fault it was doomed to wear. Yet, since it is something to have completed a resolve, the completion is dedicated to you, to whom the resolve was made.

BOOK I  
IMPULSIONS

# BROKEN ARCS

## I

ANDREW FOGGETTY was a worthy in the neighbourhood of Suffolk that owned him for inhabitant. Though he farmed a fairly extensive area of its slopes and valleys, yet it was not his occupation as farmer that earned him his peculiar repute, but rather his recreation as theologian. He belonged to a sect of strait opinions and swift and unerring judgments. Despite this deadly accuracy, however, and even in despite of certain opinions they nurtured as to their expressing in complete finality the mature convictions of the Almighty concerning the tendency and upshot of the whole universe, vital and ponderable, they might nevertheless not have loomed largely in public attention had it not been that they possessed for their chiefest luminary so determined a person as Andrew Foggetty. Not that he seemed determined at the first flush of acquaintance. Indeed, he might have been set down, and would probably have been set down, as extremely docile. But the explorer in the realms of psychological intricacy would discover this docility to be the resultant of a concentrated fierceness. If he appeared meek, it was not that he thought himself a fragile creature and a nonentity, but that he considered a docile nature the indication of heavenly forbearance toward earthy clay. If he was gentle, it was not that he considered himself a fearful person moving among others goodlier than he, but rather that

he forebore with those who could not see the heavenly crown that already clasped his brow. A gracious smile he had that routed his opponents in theological controversy. "Who can oppose dear Andrew?" said they. Yet his smile meant merely bewilderment that any could so succumb to folly as not to know for eternal verity the thing that shone so clearly before his own eye.

Yet his adhesion to the Strait Sect not only raised it out of the limbo of darkness into the light of public attention, it succeeded in accomplishing no less a service for himself. It was as though from out the impact of two rayless stars in the eternal realms of space a new and momentous luminary had leapt to glory. In his capacity of itinerant preacher (a service that occupied all his leisure hours) he was a figure of tolerable familiarity in most of the towns that sprinkled the emerald fields round and about the countryside. Oldhamlet, however, knew him best; for it was Oldhamlet that was his chief centre of operations, and his chief occasion of resort for self-refreshment and the refreshment of others.

His face was pinched and his mouth was pursed. A swift and direct nasal organ had once earned him the undesirable epithet of "foxy." His moustache made fearful similarity at times to that of a walrus; chiefly after drinking. A kindly touch was given to his face by fair feathery hair, that glimmered in the sun, upon his cheeks beyond the limits of shaving, clearly defining the razor line, like grasses lying along the border of the utmost tide-reach on sand dunes. Precisely why this should have given a kindly touch to his face is one of those inscrutable and intangible things lying beyond the realms of conscious thought; yet it certainly was so. His grey eyes now and then

twinkled with humour; twinkled indeed, and attractively; but not for long. For it was as though a grave being dwelt in the brain behind this humour; and so soon as the truant humour appeared, it was as swiftly dragged back and shut down in a remote cellarage of the mind. Self-repression, and the reduction of personality to the point of annihilation, being a matter of faith with him, had thereby become a second nature. A wit, spending a holiday in Oldhamlet, had called Foggetty a "caricature of his possibilities"; which, as the Vicar had laughed at it when he heard it, Andrew judged to be unkindly; but which was indeed kindly because discerning. Nevertheless, it so happened, as usually happens when Man endeavours to play uncomely tricks with Nature, that as he drove one Ego doughtily before him into the interminable brushwood of things forgotten, another and less desirable Ego strode out behind him to conquer and be supreme.

Wildbrook Farmhouse, happily for him, for of walking he was not over-fond, lay at but a short distance from Oldhamlet. It had been first leased by his father; and had passed to him as a happy hereditament. In his charge its pristine prosperity had declined, however.

"Wot can you expect?" James Tepson had said—a farmer of rubicund countenance and mighty stature, he, who had leased the worst farm round the neighbourhood, and who had achieved local celebrity by making it coin an annuity for the first time in the memory of his eldest listener. "Never tell me that you can make a farm go—go, I say—while you're sitting and a-porin' ore a tarned man tellin' you wot Danel meant 'bout *clay feet*!" Inexpressible scorn had burst at the height of its crescendo, and to cool his emotions his nose had dived down into a massive mug of flat

small ale that had lain untouched this last hour. "It can't be done," came finally, as the granite face emerged again up to the light of day; "'t isn't recignisble in Nature."

This the whole countryside had felt. Whether James Tepson expressed the sentiments of the countryside, or whether the countryside expressed the sentiments of Tepson, is too intricate a matter for discovery. It was everywhere apparent, however, that labyrinthine theology and mangel-wurzels consorted not; that the eye that could parcel out with mathematical precision national, international, terrestrial, celestial, and infernal happenings for a mild matter of millenniums was thereby unfitted to select with sufficient accuracy such matters as manures and crops. The more notable matter for present attention is, however, that Andrew's mind had become familiarized with certain sharp and unalterable dovetailings of eternal precision, that wore for him the favour of divine Beauty of Person; and his mind had thereby become preoccupied with this mechanical cohesion not only to the neglect of his farm, but no less to the neglect of those gentler relations of life that constitute the blood of character and the sap of human kindliness. He was wont to instance himself as a marvel of divine predestination. "Why the Lord should have chosen me I do not know," he would say, with the settled conviction that the Lord had so chosen nevertheless, and that the Lord was all-wise. One regarding him, and hearing him, might well wonder too; and leave the question, fitly impressed with the inscrutableness of the mystery. Alas, that the sentiments drunk up into character do not remain a personal concern, but radiate and ramify into the lot of others, bringing what mischief and blessing we know not!



So the years brought further declension of prosperity at Wildbrook Farm, and increased acquaintance with the letter of theological intricacy, each playing in and to the other like lightning to lightning over a summer sky. This did not so much disturb his mental equilibrium as it did that of Mary, his good wife.

She was sharper-featured than he, alert and thin, over-busy with household matters withal, to the stultification of visible emotion and the congenial interplay with society of any sort. This was only too perceivable by all; yet it needed no very acute perception to note a certain quality that hung in her grey eye, that told of suppressed emotions; a quality of warmth that spoke of subterrene strength a little bitter. It was she who had established the poultry-run; it was she who tended it with unfailing assiduity, with the comely Rose to aid her. With such success did she do so, that Andrew had been known to declare at Oldhamlet Market that he thanked the Lord for this anyway, that his poultry-run cleared his rent invariably, and moreover gave him a little in hand over and above. It was an incautious remark at best. For farming was sufficiently hard-pressed a calling for any suggestion of incidental profits to be hailed with avidity. Therefore many other farmers had promptly laid great stress on poultry in their farm economy, considerably cutting into Foggetty's pre-eminence. Still, Mrs. Foggetty was not to be reduced to her last entrenchment so; for she then opened communications with the Flatland of Western London for the direct supply of eggs, and so acquired a dependable and independent proprietary, though it meant that her last hours of personal leisure were now finally gone; and her labours, even with the dusk-haired Rose by her side, outspent now the tolling of the midnight bell only too frequently.

## II

It was Rose that was now the occasion of discussion between Andrew and Mary Foggetty. The concatenation of several mishaps in farming venture had coincided with a letter from a friend recommending a situation in a goodly family of Ipstowe which could be duly influenced for the asking. Preoccupied Andrew was all for prompt acceptance; Mary's motherly instinct hung back, however. She did not expect Rose always to be contained at home; no, no, it was not that; yet Rose was but seventeen, which in her judgment was too unripe an age for any girl to venture the experience of the world.

Yet in truth, though Rose was of so tender an age, it must be confessed that she scarcely looked it. Sufficiently under average stature to suggest intensity of temperament, no willowy beauty was hers. Her limbs and figure were even now of sufficient rondure and fulness to suggest voluptuous maturity, though mixed withal with girlish charm. Yet when she walked, and more when she ran, from neck to ankle she flowed so with continuity of curve, decorative of apt proportion, that she seemed of slighter girth and of loftier stature than actually she had. The bloom of health sat on her cheeks in delicate tincture, and her nose suggested the translucency of a shell. Her dusky hair, like silver night elbowing the gloom of twilight, flowed from off her lofty forehead in tender masses to a simple coiffure. In her eyes was the blue of romance, limpid, and yet interlaced with a harder grey.

She herself was not averse to the proposed change; rather she welcomed it with ardour. Young blood is urgent for adventures; but no adventure did Wild-

brook Farm find her. Even the nearer, yet still sufficiently wild romance of twilit hedgerows in company with any or other bold and youthful bucolic was forbidden her. Forbidden not only by imperative poultry operations, nor only by the stern, inflexible precept of her father, to whom love, though once indeed it was wild to him, wore the deadly hue of human frailty; but more by the sure and lynx-eyed policy of her mother. Forbid an inch, and human nature rises imperious for an ell. And so Rose, with wildness running the wilder in her blood because of repression, added her voice to her own undoing.

### III

YET it must be admitted that not much of the decision was to lie in her own hands. Her interposition was swiftly set aside by her being bidden out of the room, though her voice served to set the tide of advantage in her father's favour.

He who thinks to make accurate prognosis of a man's action from a careful survey of his declared opinions is already foredoomed to a disastrous awakening. Andrew was an example of manlike vagary, even to his own bosom-wife's bewilderment. She had trusted on advancing the omnipotent plea of anti-worldliness. Obviously to send Rose out to combat the world was to set her amid the gins and snares of the tempter; wherefore with reflex rapidity her mind set down as sure beyond conviction that Andrew's lofty tenets would refuse, at whatever cost, to expose his flower of summer to the possible soilure of evil. She said so much, with an air of victory complete, sitting then foursquare in her hard chair in the gathering

dusk of early spring, facing Andrew with some pressure of lips.

But Andrew in calm graciousness turned her flank by the deadly manœuvre of refusing to occupy the battlements arbitrarily set out for him.

"But, my dear Mary," he said, "of course what you say is deeply true; we must indeed guard our child. But you forget, my dear, that we must recognize conditions. We are in the hands of God, it is true; but the value of a soul is its power of resistance. We must vanquish the Evil one; but we can only vanquish him by meeting him, not by avoiding him. Even the Master had to be equipped for His work by a long wrestle with the Tempter. It is so always. We must help Rose by advising her; by praying for her, and strengthening her. But it is not our business to take her out of the conflict. And, Mary, think! we couldn't do so if we wished it never so much. For we cannot always be with her. She must brave the battle some time."

"Yes, but she is so young!"

"True, she is young. Now you touch the difficulty of all: her youth. That troubles me, I must admit. But see how things have shaped themselves! Does there not seem a destiny in it?"

"But, Andrew, you're so annoying."

"My dear!"

"Yes, you are! If you like a thing, it's destiny; if you don't like it, it's temptation. I'm sorry, Andrew; but I must say it. I think this is a temptation."

"By the same manner of reasoning, Mary, you mean that you don't like it."

"Yes."

"I see. But what have our likings to do with it?"  
This was a bewildering assumption of the position

of affairs prior to her exceedingly awkward attack on his main redoubt; and Mary was frankly nonplussed. So Andrew, after waiting a moment, looking gravely at his wife the while, went on—

“You see, Mary, we’re not concerned in the matter. There seems to me a distinct leading in the matter.” This time he trod firmly over the bridge that she had routed him from before, relying, without appreciating that he did so, on the fact that human nature, lover of change as it is, has an antipathy to two victories of precisely similar nature, even though the second be assured. “It’s not a question of ourselves. When you come to consider it, it’s very curious, and more! it is very illuminating, how all things seemed to have joined in pressing this matter. Here comes Ted’s very kindly letter just at the very time I feel most keenly that loss in cattle——”

“Will you try and make good that loss over the sheep?”

“Certainly I will!”

“Why—if it’s the Lord’s will.”

“That’s a very shortsighted way of looking at it, Mary!”

“You say so!”

“But is it not so?”

Another discomfiture! Poor Mary, without any question as to the rights or wrongs of her case, was being slowly yet surely pressed steadily out of the field. And each position relinquished was notified by her failure to give back reply to reply, permitting Andrew to enter fresh issues, which he did.

“Another thing you seem to forget, Mary—and this seems to me much like a sinful assumption—is that the Lord can look to Rose fully as well as we—better, far better! The whole question before us is

simply one of faith. And it seems to me we do wrongly to hesitate. What right have we to hesitate?"

"Then, Andrew, you have decided to send her?" Poor Mary's face was pitiful with tragic decision. What do mothers know of impending peril? Does the preternatural sixth sense, the swift psychic intuition, come with the bearing of child? Have they fateful lodgements in them?

"I have not decided; I am consulting with you."

"Andrew, you're not consulting with me; you're just beating me in argument."

"But, my dear, I'm waiting to hear your reasons. Until good reasons are given I must assume your objections have no value."

"But I have given reasons."

"And I have attempted to show you—I think, I hope, graciously to show you—that your reasons are no reasons, that they have no value, that they seem to me to be flying in the face of a Divine will. So it seems to me."

"When is she to go?"

"Now you're deciding."

"I'm only putting your intention into words, Andrew." She spoke wearily. "I know from experience what a waste of time argument is. You will have your way, I suppose. I will go and tell Rose."

She went out of the room; and as she was going Andrew felt a youngling pity leap alive in him, bidding him call her back, and concede her point with a meek shrug, so to gain the comfort of mind he had not now: positively by setting aside the lurking faun of anxiety that sprang through the ambush of his soul, and negatively by creating the discomfort in her of wresting her point by feminine yet most unwomanly dogged-

ness. But that this should be it was of course necessary that the vital decision should be achieved while she passed before him from the fireside chair to the door. A quick decision; and unfitted to the tentative nature of the mental operation! Thus it was that when she had left it was too late for reluctances; and with something of perplexity, of responsibility mixed in with his relief, he went over to a shelf adjacent and picked a theological octavo to toy with in the line of reading.

#### IV

So it came about that Rose was to taste the sweetly brackish world. From the aloof dovecote of Wildbrook Farm, from the routine of simplicity, most winsome to the thought, but most monotonous in the practice, she was to venture to do pioneer in circumstance. Not the first, she! Yet though frequency inspires monotony, and repetition heedlessness, each such venture trembles with vitality.

The inner thought of Rose who can tell, as preparations for her departure were set afoot under Mrs. Foggetty's motherly tenderness? Thoughts? Emotions, rather; a confusion of colours and throbbing rhythms, mixed inextricably with the business of arrangements. Now that the decision had indeed arrived, fear took hold on her. And, though Ipstowe lay at no such great remove, yet as she took her way these days through Oldhamlet, its cottages, houses and lanes wore shades of sadness to her eye. The spring sun seemed to have hues of Autumn in it. The trees, heavy in snowy blossom, like the front of a gay Summer taunting a defeated Winter with display of its own peculiar glory, whispered to her, in the straying

breezes, of jollity left behind. Ipstowe, that had loomed romantic to her before, now seemed to her swift sensibilities as being rocked perpetually in the arms of a grey, wet, wizened winter. Did Summer ever come to cities? Assuredly Spring could not. So she fluctuated between fear and desire, hope and bewilderment, prospect, sadness and anxiety.

Mrs. Foggetty, too, though busied by day, and through much of the night, with preparations far beyond the simple needs of Rose's position and Rose's person, was haunted by motherly fear and care, lying awake of a night imagining evils innumerable. Only Andrew found preoccupation. It would be most unfair to him to say that he knew neither care nor anxiety. Indeed, frequently they girt him about with ruthless dominion. Yet, if the farmstead did not occupy him to sufficient exclusion, he had ever the alluring fields of prospective cataclysms to befall this monstrous world. And to these he fled. He turned to them for succour; and they succoured him. Wherein he was fortunate if a little selfish.

With ruthless, relentless step came the day in May when Mrs. Foggetty took Rose, looking bewitching despite an effort at fashion, up to Ipstowe, to install her in her new abode.

Ipstowe was the battleground of town, city and country. It was, in fact, a city, though an unpretentious one; but it wore the general visage of a town; it had the general habiliments, manners and aspirations of a town. The distinction between a town-inhabitant in proper demeanour, and a city-inhabitant in proper demeanour, is an insidious and subtle one to bid step forward in words, though that such a distinction is set with its foundations deep down in veracious and undeniable mannerism is a thing not to be called



in question. By this distinction the inhabitants were indisputably town-inhabitants. It was as though city honours had suddenly floated down on them, and found them unready to wear them. They were not citizens; the name refused to fit them. They had nothing of the breadth of citizens: not even the corpulent breadth of citizens. They had no true market-square of course (it was a city), though it had obscure and undiscoverable market-places; market-places for specific events; but the inhabitants were wont to stroll the streets at dusk disconsolately, remembering that they had had a market-square, but that it had been clandestinely spirited away from them. They had a cathedral. But whether it was because this cathedral, bringing in its ecclesiastical train the merely secular honour of citydom, was the deep-seated cause of their troubles, or whether its ponderable pile awed their souls, struggling as yet in bucolic chrysalis, it is difficult to say; the fact is sufficient that they avoided it sedulously and, as it were, suspiciously, with averted face and protrudant shoulder. On Sundays some of the worthier burgesses sufficiently overcame their antipathy to besprinkle its roomy proportions with broad-cloth and silks, so to deaden a little the hollow echoes of a service that proceeded, for the sake of adventitious enlivenment doubtless, at quick-gallop. But at all other whiles it was left to reverberate with the sibilant whispers of chance visitors; or to repose, feeling its soul in pride and silence.

Its main street ran up amid shops of sumptuous hue and goodly display this Spring morning; carrying on its pavements, among their humbler frequenters, a considerable rally of young men and maidens of leisure. The young maidens were of healthful queenly carriage and frank countenance, blending their laugh-

ter easily and happily with the sunshine. The young men were scarcely so natural; they seemed to labour under the painful necessity of adorning their bold characters. Both men and maidens trod the streets with the firm steps and conviction that this was veritable country. It had ever been so with them; and they showed it in air, gait and garment; rough tweed and caps showing off their athletic figures, their wind and sun-tanned faces. The street was a-bustle with laughter and healthful activity. A country wind swept up it withal, softly laden with breath of blossom.

Up this High Street Rose attracted some attention with her twilit beauty, as Mrs. Foggetty led her to the westerly end where goodly abodes lay. Such of the young men as had no maidens to cavalier, mingled ardent praise of her with critical disparagement of anxious, honest Mary, whose heart flew all a-flutter for her child. Rose herself, though no stranger to the city, found sadness immersed in wonderment, as though Ipstowe had become a new place to her eye now that it was to be her dwelling-place. These very familiar milliners' shops that had aforetime supplied her with fineries, seemed decked strangely to her.

Having deposited her sacred charge, and taken farewell of her, mingling farewell with prodigal counsel, Mrs. Foggetty made her way back to the railway station at the remote end of the city, from which a single line ran to Oldhamlet. Here she discovered Andrew but newly arrived.

"I came on by the next train," said he awkwardly, "thinking I might catch Rose and you before you went on. It was, of course, foolish; yet I felt a little restless. How did you leave the child? Did she take on at all at being left?"

"No, she'll feel it on the morrow. Strangeness always overcomes partings."

"Yes, yes; of course!"

"Well, Andrew, please God we've done the right thing. But I feel very anxious and fearful. I'm glad you came, Andrew. I feel lonely at leaving our child."

## V

THE position that Rose occupied was one of those in which title and icy courtesy were made to serve instead of fit emolument. The title served the purpose of halving the ordinary rate of remuneration an ordinary nurse would receive if she bore that plain ungarnished name. It served another purpose. Whereas a menial, in plain fact recognized so, has her recognized set of duties, and may be ordered to set about them with all conceivable severity, in the strict circle so circumscribed, a person assuming a decorative title, fares far otherwise. She is not to be ordered, she is to be requested, with as much of courtesy as may serve; and therefore functions a menial would scorn to do fall to her lot. So Rose found. Being observant, and not untouched with humour, she began to gauge the objectionable nature of the task administered by the suavity of the tone employed. "Kindly do this," was an assertive signal of joy to her before ever she knew the labour appointed. "I wonder, Rose dear, if you would mind," in silkiest of tongues, caused her heart to sink within her in gloomy prognosis.

One privilege of the lower orders she had, however; and this was a strict parcelling-out of her hours of liberty. Sunday being the day the children were permitted to breathe the expansive atmosphere of the

family into which it was their lot to be born, Rose was set at liberty after the midday meal. Liberty it was; yet liberty of a limited order. For it was strictly laid down that she should employ this liberty in visiting her home. Her mother had enjoined it, and her father demanded it, in parental care. But her employers enforced it for reasons more subtle and less unselfish. In addition to this she had her evening a week, which grew buxom to a half-day every alternate week; and, gala of galas! Pippa's annual festival became a monthly holiday with her.

Neither fish nor fowl, she was restless in her new abode. Her weekly visits home, too, were a mixed event. True, she longed to see the old faces: but whether it was that the weekly partings were troubled with ancillary pain, or that her young restlessness drove her toward that subtle thing in life spelt experience, it is difficult to say. More probably the latter. Existence had grown banal save for the heart of youth, and a certain love for the children whose charge fell to her care. A strange body of undeliberate thought that was native to her found a steadying theme of anger in the systematic neglect of these children under the guise and gush of lavish affection. Here there rolled first before her view an inchoate mass of experience for her to strive with in her instinct of thought. Conscious thought she had not; thought become aware of itself, and rejoicing in its activities, was foreign to her: yet a living instinct of thought she had, as witness the irrefragable fact that chaos became ordered into tenet and judgment; and, as it did so, restlessness fell from her, and health ensued.

Yet this was sporadic. Capable of turning in on herself, she was human withal, and demanded companionship; if not that rarer thing comradeship. She

sought it; and failed to find it. Here and there, in the weeks that passed, she struck on the semblance of it; which, once proved but a semblance, was unostentatiously dropped—and so she earned a name for caprice whose nature was the furthest remove possible from caprice and fickleness.

Thus the plough went up and down, to and fro. She became like a rich glebe opening its bosom to the grey heavens in hunger for seed. Any seed; darnel if not fair wheat. Activity is a function of Nature. Therefore activity, to earn the name, must be natural. And living the life of others she did not find natural. The soul demands its Ego if only to deny it. Her soul was insurgent for her Ego; but it was not yet. Her being cried in her asking her to be somewhat for itself: gold she did not aspire to; nor silver; steel maybe, or good cast bronze; but a figure; if all else failed a figure of clay. Instead of which she was like water poured into channels that others had digged, running where others willed, hot or cold at the behest of others.

Yet occasion was coming on the relentless foot of Time.

## VI

ON one glorious evening she was returning from home. Dusk was setting over the Sabbatic calm of Oldhamlet. On a soft vesper breeze a gentle murmur came of innumerable twittering of birds merged into a seraph's far whisper. Over the noise of this came the note of a throstle that communed with himself at the close of day. Another gentler sound floated in the air, working itself into a moving cadence; and, when the winds moved more quickly their

pinions, uttering itself into a hymn coming in gusty measures from a church that, from the platform of the station of Oldhamlet, could be seen nestling amid trees beyond a waving field of corn. Earth seemed whispering her song in various manner of utterance wherever the thought turned. Her large tender hand had smoothed out distinctions of utterance with the soft erasure of peace. Set out for a large temple, she in pomp of peace moved through her ancient ritual of worship. High in the arched splendour of the heavens a tracery of whimsical clouds lent enchantment to distance. Shades that are not colours but infinite suggestions of colour, ruled up there. Mauve, pink, gold that was cream, cream that was gold, and opal, faded in a diminuendo; mounting again in fresh auxiliary of strength to the fleshier hues of amethyst and amber.

As Rose leant on the balustrade backing the crude platform of the station, her gaze was toward the distant church amid the trees, but her thoughts were neither there nor anywhere. Initially she had contemplated the church in a mixture of curiosity and fretfulness. Once only had she ventured within its portals; and then she was only enabled to watch its pageant from the shade by the porch. Seen within, her paternal parent had inevitably heard of it; and the vials of his wrath were on this towered iniquity. From her shadowed aloofness she had listened with wonderment and something of distaste. For inward rebellion against paternal rule will not suffice to eradicate the subtleties of paternal impregnation of ideas and precepts.

As she awaited her train the sound and cadence of music from this simple yet venerable pile brought this experience back to her, and she was collating it with

her present more open mind. From this she had drifted into a strange mood. The peace without was not unfelt by her. Yet it combated with a ruling disquietude in her inmost being. A large wave of peace would pass through the agitated waters of her soul; calming it indeed, yet the more accentuating the turmoil that characterized it so continually now. The peace of the evening was a mood not to pass: to be drunk up by the soul, and be for ever after in the tissue and woof of it. Such was its more final end. At the moment, as she leant on the weather-worn woodwork, its immediate purpose was to make her aware that she was a considerably altered being for these months of standing much alone. Prematurely disquietude had come on her.

Letting her thoughts move undeliberatively she had not noticed a man that strode the platform behind her, eyeing her interestedly. Obviously she was the centre of his attractions. His exercise of limb had her for centre of attention even as his mind swung round her for pivot of thought. From heel to head-dress his eye took her in. Golf-sticks slung over his shoulder told his day's occupation and accounted for the easy Norfolk suit he was clad in. To the medium height of men he added a loose build inclining to elegance. His years were no longer youthful, and yet he was still young. The premature ripeness of easy circumstance was his; a ripeness unmeet because premature.

Once or twice, as in his sentry-like pacing he had approached toward her, he had slackened his pace as though he purposed speaking to her. Yet he had passed on. And she, looking over the fields of young green corn bowed gently in waves of whispering wind, knew nothing of this perturbation and deliberation proceeding behind her.

Soon the dying whistle of the train approaching through a cutting smote on her ears, and she gathered herself together in preparedness. Wishing to be alone she chose an empty carriage. Yet, though with such care she chose an empty carriage, she scarcely noticed a figure that, as the train started on the move, flung open the door and entered the compartment. Nor, when within, did she notice what manner of being it was. Thoughts she had none; it were an inaccuracy to speak of thought in one with whom deliberation was so unformulated. For her mind was in vacancy. And when a voice struck across her vacancy she was startled.

"Do you mind if I smoke?"

"No! Oh, no, no; certainly not!"

The aromatic fumes of a pleasant cigar floated across her. Presently the same voice said again—

"Beautiful evening, isn't it?"

"Yes."

Monosyllabic shyness put out a hand to hold him off, knowing no other reason that did not smack of unsociability and roughness. But evidently he was not disposed to be so baulked. Moreover, leisure of opportunity obviated any necessity of haste on his part, or consequent rudeness.

"Are you going far up the line, may I ask?"

"To Ipstowe."

"Are you really? Why, I'm going there."

This was news to hear neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

"Do you live at Ipstowe?"

"I—I—I work there."

A subtle distinction this, pregnant of much! In fact, it was the revolution of her mind finding expres-



sion; peeping its head, as it were, tenderly round the corner.

"Oh, you don't live there, then?"

"Oh, no!"

Monosyllabic shyness was certainly a difficulty to a moving tenor of speech. She had fled Don Juans in the street; and though subsequent thought had reproached her for so turning aside the possibility of enriching acquaintance, experience anyway, yet at the next occasion shyness had again impelled a similar action. Her soul had said to itself that if such acquaintance was illicit it was arbitrarily illicit; and that, however it might be so, its possibility of subsequent development need not fare anyway differently from an acquaintanceship made in the more regular channels of social intercourse. Besides, what social intercourse had she? Nevertheless, instinct had overcome reasoning, and she had escaped the toils of admiring youth.

But in the pent compartment of a railway train flight is a somewhat more difficult matter.

He, on his part, finding such ragged efforts leading always to the pit of futility, settled down into a more systematic attempt.

"I don't remember having seen you ever at Ipstowe."

This was a more than ordinarily subtle stroke; far more subtle than he had imagined. For it induced her to raise her eyes to glance along the length of the musty seat to note what kind of a man he was, and whether she had seen or noticed him. No, she did not know him; but as she looked straight in his eyes, a strong look leapt in them that struck fire in her. She raised no flash to his flash, for she looked away; but a quick tremor of expectancy ran in her blood.

"I haven't been there long," she said.

"No, you can't have been, for I know most of the people there. It's not a large place, you see. But you like it, I suppose?"

"I don't know anybody there." A whimsical smile died along her lips and cheek.

"Yes, that's very true," he laughed easily. "I don't suppose we'd like heaven if we didn't know one or two people there we liked. And yet a place is something, you know, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is."

The conversation was becoming easier to guide along the paths of smoothness. And ease lent ease.

"But you must get to know some people there. I'll introduce you if you'll be so kind as to let me. By the way, I don't know your name. May I inquire?"

"Rose Foggetty," replied Rose simply, yet with considerable perturbation rustling through her mind's serenity.

"Mine is Richard Webber; more familiarly, Dick. But you'd like to have my card?" He rifled his letter-case. "I'm sorry, I'm out of them. Still, there it is, you know, Richard Webber."

## VII

BROWN evening mantled on the earth as the train sped on, succeeding to dusky night. He had guided conversation past the reefs and shoals out on to the broad waters beyond. He had changed his position to the seat opposite her, avoiding the seat beside her as too likely to disturb. Previously he had had but a sidelong aspect of her; which not only suggested inquisitiveness in its too frequent privilege, but was even

unsatisfactory on its own merits. But now, opposite her, her beauty rose before him like a breathing incense.

"I'm very glad I met you," said he presently. "Are you glad you met me?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered simply. Despite all perturbation she was glad, and knew it. She spoke from instinct, and spoke truly.

The simple affirmative checked him. It thrilled him. Coming from the native founts of simplicity it spoke to the highest in him, and his highest responded. The lyre of his soul rang to its dominant. Chords of emotion swelled through his being sounding the great theme of purity and chivalry; not in raucous and fleshly brass, but in spiritual strings and primitive purity of wood. The orchestration purged his blood, and lifted him nearer the angels. The irritation of conquest was denied him, and he was cleansed with the melodies of tenderness and fragrant responsibility. Even as a dove of the chase floating humbly to the hand of the pursuer purifies the distemper of the hunt and sweetens the heat of the blood with appeals to trust and worthiness, so did her simple avowal sink the base in him and lift the noble. Not a hair of her head would come to harm by him, he swore, whatever opportunities lay open to him. Heaven floated about his forehead as he sat looking on her, as she drooped her eyebrows again after accompanying her simple affirmative with a quiet look of confidence. Speech denied him, he grappled with his nobility.

Yes, she was glad. That irrefragable fact spoke in her blood. Was it so ill a thing to rejoice in human comradeship? Little of companionship was she to receive if she restricted further acquaintance to that

procured by present acquaintance, like eddies widening on eddies. So her strength of mind rose and flung mental disturbance from her. It did not resist her; it merely clung.

Silence had ensued after so simple a baring of herself. He was awed, still in grapple with greatness coming on him, and she had hitherto left the initiative of conversation with him.

"I shouldn't have said that," she said.

"Why not?" he responded stoutly; "if it's true."

"Of course I'm glad I met you."

"Then to say so is to be frank, and I admire you for it."

"I know one shouldn't say such things," she went on. "They're apt to be misunderstood."

"I don't misunderstand you, I can assure you of that. As I said, I very much admire your frankness. And I do. You believe that, don't you?"

"Of course, if you say so. What I meant was that of course I was glad to meet you. One is always glad of companionship. I am. And I was lonely just then; I think I had got the dumps."

As a gust dulls the mirror of a laughing stretch of water, this qualification took the bright hue off his elation, and correspondingly reduced his nobility. The air he snuffed with the nostrils of his mind smacked more of mortality and less and less of rareness and spiritual keenness.

"Do you live at Oldhamlet?" he asked.

"My father and mother do," she responded.

"That's rather a subtle distinction, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," said she, and laughed low. It was a subtle distinction, yet it voiced a rising instinct in her.

"You're a nomad, I see." Blank incomprehension

fronted him. "I mean, you live nowhere; you're a wanderer on the face of the earth."

"Oh, I wish I were!" she ejaculated.

"Do you?" He laughed gaily and easily. "Why?"

"Oh, I should like to go about and travel."

It lay quivering on his lips to say, "Oh, we may one of these days," but he checked it, and broke the thread of freedom.

"I should long to travel, and see people and places," she went on. "This place is so small, and the people are so—so—little. But to see things that are different, and people that are different—oh, I should love it!"

"Would you settle down after?" he asked, eyeing her curiously.

"Oh, I don't know. Perhaps. Anyhow, that's what I should like now."

"One never knows what mayn't happen," he said gnomically.

The far suggestion, begotten in him by sentimentality and something he knew not what and dared not face, was lost on her. It had taken wing with timid boldness, hoping to alight somewhere in her emotions; but finding nothing save a flood of incomprehension it fluttered back to him, without so much as a twig or spray of success. Meanwhile, she went on—

"You see, to go about is to live. And I want to live. I didn't know quite what it was until I started talking. Talking does clear your ideas, doesn't it?"

"Rather! Yes!"

"It was just that I was thinking about at Oldhamlet, and yet I didn't know what I was thinking about. I didn't seem to be thinking at all, you know; and yet now I know it was just that that I was thinking about

—that I wanted to live. That's why I should like to travel. But I don't suppose I ever shall."

The train drew in at Ipstowe. As he helped her out on to the platform her dark beauty shone aloof and strange in the lights of the station, yet tempting with warm humanity.

"I may see you home, I trust?" he said as they came out into the station-yard.

"Oh, not all the way," said she, overcome again with that strange fear of circumstance and occasion, that circumstance and occasion that she was beginning to hate so strenuously.

"You will permit me part of the way, I hope?"

"Yes; that is, if you want to."

"Of course I want to," said he, and yet strangely seemed to wish to avoid the publicity of main streets. She herself wondered at this; yet put it down to that tender desire for darkness that, without knowing why, she vaguely ascribed to him since it was already alive in herself.

Once he endeavoured to slip his arm within hers. Indeed, he succeeded, and for a breathless few minutes quivered with the soft touch of her arm along his. But she drew timidly away, and he relinquished his conquest. Silence ensued after this, the silence of delicious timidity, as they breathed the warm air of trembling luxury, half-fleshly, half-spiritual. She not less than he; but on her part it was with deeper emotion and bigger earnestness, and therefore her joy trembled less, and was less dashed with colour.

With him it became something wilder because less natural and less deeply eloquent. Yet to him it was of the essence of purity. But while with her it was her opening of life, and therefore came with large impulsion, to him, with something of the soilure of experi-

ence on him, it brought strange resolves for nobility. Hence the complexity in him, as contrasted with the simplicity in her. Hence also the reluctance in her contrasted with the eagerness in him. For simplicity is slow-footed; but complexity, only too desirous to be quit of itself, is feverish and anxious for resolution.

So they walked through the quiet streets until they arrived within a short distance of her abode. Here she stopped, thus quietly forbidding him to escort her any farther. He took her unuttered mandate as cavaliers should, but wished to know when they were to meet again.

"You say when, and I'll be there," said he.

Here the Feminine overcame the Female in her, with a short swift gush not insincere, and most surely not to be esteemed lightly. For Instinct, the instinct of ages alive in her, together with her own heaven-got wisdom, spoke; and the speakings of Instinct are the voice of the Lord.

"Oh, do you think we should meet again?" she fluttered.

"Why not?" he expostulated, simulating amazement. And as silence greeted him, he continued: "What's the harm in it?" A further silence. "We met innocently, and we can go on meeting innocently, can't we?"

"I suppose so," she breathed softly.

"Then we will meet," he said, with modulated triumph in his voice. "What day?"

"I come out on Wednesdays."

"Wednesday, then! What time?"

"Half-past six?" she queried, looking up at him timidly.

"Done! Half-past six. I'll be just here."

She turned away, and left him.

He himself had won this; he knew it, and was elated. A dangerous thing and inevitable is the power of man over woman, as subtle, subtler, than that of woman over man.

## VIII

MR. RICHARD WEBBER, or, in his own words, "more familiarly, Dick," resided at large in England. As it behoved a man dating an allowance to the fact of his birth, and the liberty that accompanies such adventitious good fortune, he was in the habit of spending a good portion of his time in London. He wore no shackles of locality. If Scotland won his fancy, to Scotland he went. Not that his allowance sufficed for so liberal an expenditure. It did not. But the gracious fortune that presided at his birth brought him other things besides an allowance. It brought him, for instance, an open disposition—not for the extension of hospitality, but for the acceptance of hospitality: a not inconsiderable gift, the lack of which, together with an unreasonable and strictly plebeian thing called pride, stands incontinently in the way of progress for lower orders of mankind. It brought him, too, the friends to extend this hospitality; or, rather, to speak more accurately, friends who, seeing he was young, single and of gay soul, were only too glad to learn that he proposed visiting them.

Though a traveller over most parts of England at most times of the year, two places chiefly won his attention and attendance. London, for reasons needing no exposition; and Ipstowe, for reasons more subtle. In fact, his chief source of revenue came from the vicinity of Ipstowe; from an uncle, who, being childless, gave him largely to hope, and for more tangible



and immediate satisfaction, found him funds for personal disbursement. Ipstowe, therefore, claimed his attention with some regularity during the months of summer. For the country had a real and quite unsimulated delight for him, and until the dun hot rays of Summer disenchanted its freshness and soiled its virginal tenderness of hue, it was his habit to rejoice in its splendour.

His antecedent pedigree and parentage matter little. His father, an army officer, had succumbed with something of suddenness to the terrors of an Eastern climate. His mother, sorely stricken by the blow, had turned to him with more than ordinary tenderness, finding his nurture the outlet for a life that had no other zest. A kindly and paternal government had, according to its canons of rectitude, helped to eke out the slender funds with which she found herself straitened after this calamity; but as these sufficed not, she had turned to her brother for assistance.

His response had been of a characteristic nature. The logic of disbursing funds that gave no return did not strike him. Money was nothing, as he was careful to explain in his letter, turning to philosophizing as not only a favourite pursuit of his, but one which, as it so happened, came in particularly useful as a worthy weapon for the purposes of fencing: money was nothing, its only value was in what it achieved. From this it followed, by a process of logic that perplexed Mrs. Webber, that the achievement merited all attention. The argument was long, and, though deft, dry. Its aim, however, was not unobvious. For, to wring the highest achievement out of the money certain incalculable forces seemed determined to wrest from him, he proposed that she should come over and housekeep for him.

Despite all tortuosities of character he was kindly. He needed companionship (his very crochettiness was sign of this), and it could be forgiven him if he employed this method of procuring it. Thus the connection with Valley Hall, and the hereditary funds of Valley Hall, was commenced. When her son was aged fifteen she too went to join her husband.

So Richard lapsed on his uncle's attention. And when of age he received the allowance that enabled him to mingle inclination with leisure. He had been a disappointment to his uncle in that he had not attempted a career; for the old man, like so many when life begins to slip from them, wished to begin living his life again in his nephew. Ambition, not unworthy ambition, but ambition nevertheless, seized on him, which he endeavoured to satisfy by proxy. Richard, however, had failed him, and so had baulked himself of those larger funds that might have been his. Moreover, he had laid himself under the necessity of keeping a cautious eye on the winds of the old man's favour.

## IX

HENCE had ensued in him a somewhat complex character, which, again, had led to a certain indecision of motive—an indecision arising not from a well-developed width of range, but from an indistinct shape of disposition. Whatever he chose to do had to be referred to certain standards of conduct that he had come to adopt in his subconscious mind as the dominant notes of his well-being. Even wholly worthy desires took often an unworthy colour. For example, as has been said, he was very truly and genuinely fond of the country, which is a sign of health in any man.

Moreover, he was particularly fond of the country around Ipstowe. Sussex he knew, Kent he knew, Devon, Derbyshire and Cumberland. All these, as country, he himself preferred; but Ipstowe and its environment was to him the place of his childhood, and he loved them with an especial tenderness, which, though no rare attribute when maturity is shading into age, is a sufficiently rare virtue in a young man of twenty-eight. Both of these things were quite genuine and quite true. Either would have been sufficient to attract him to Ipstowe during the months when summer marches from tenderness to pomp; both pulling together would have sufficed to make it an annual rule of conduct. Nevertheless, the fact that he had to remind his uncle of his presence, and, more, to nurture his uncle into a continual mood of good favour, began to be effectual in making him think that his visits were for this purpose and no other.

In fact, beauty began to wear a cynic aspect. Yet he was not temperamentally disposed to the cynic humour, and so he wore his complexity lightly. Still, it worked its will in him.

He himself was wholesome, yet he was the proper subject for the cynic. But, inasmuch as he was the proper subject for the cynic, corruptive influences were at work in him. Occasions for greatness that had come upon him he had worn lightly; not the lightness of self-depreciation, but the lightness of effortlessness; and thus they had failed of their purpose in him. Occasions for purity of intention had come; and though to these he had nearly always responded, yet in attributing his course of action to less worthy impulses he had failed, here too, of their true intention.

He was kindly, and laid down kindliness and courtesy as an infallible rule of human action. He was

not always kind himself. Yet human frailty is a smaller concern if a great principle be but seen clearly. In many of his actions he recognized the essential kinship of all men. This sprang from his kindliness, and remained in evidence despite the fact that he was hedged about with the trite conventions of those among whom he moved.

In fact, he gave the impression of the potentiality of manliness if once heroic action could be won from him. Not only had heroic action not been won from him hitherto, but he had not even had occasion for it. But no man's life passes without one such dramatic presentation, and his was to be no exception.

## X

THAT Sunday night Rose had held her quick pulse in suspension till she achieved the solitude of her bedroom. In fact, suspense had been achieved otherwise than by the operation of her will, and in a way that made the subsequent rumination of her thoughts a more poignant matter than need otherwise have been. For Romance is the spirit's revolt against a dead-level of experience; it is the soul's demand for imperial colour when stricken by the greys of monotony.

Rose had come from a sudden rush of colour into her heaven, and her especial desire was to dissect her thoughts, analyze her emotions, and discover of what nature were the hues whose strange advent into her heaven made her blood run so curiously. But, immediately upon her entry, swift duties were thrust upon her. The monotony of her experience took strong hold of her to make her well aware of its existence and its power. Therefore, though she did not know

it, she was made the more disposed to read the signs of the aurora favourably. The balance of reflection was anew rendered the less possible of attainment by an uprush of revolt.

Gazing out of her window on the moonlit night her thoughts were bathed in pleasurable excitement. The night was clear; a soft haze clinging about the grass and trees only touching with a pencil of softness the cold limning of the moon. As the houses in this portion of Ipstowe lay on the margin of the country pure, and as her abode in particular lay among its farthermost, Rose had a clear view away to the east. The fact that a lengthy garden lay between her and the far country beyond only tutored her eye to distance and charm.

The moon at full floated midway between distance and zenith through a sea of opal blue. Whiteness quivered in the air, and even the long shadows of the trees on the lawn were paled by the presence of particles of silver light that floated irresponsibly through the air, softening the distinctions of light and shade. The trees were struck with an enchantment, and, though they emitted no rustle of sound, they trembled against the shimmering fields beyond. Near bush and far brake seemed as artificial obstacles over which the spirits of silver leapt in light and sank in darkness. Over the grass the dew was already settling heavily. The scene seemed like an artificial fairy playground as the beads of dew glittered in the pale silver glory of the Queen of Night; as though, indeed, some fairy crew, disturbed at their elfin merriment, in fleeing had cast off their bejewelled gossamers that now strewed the lawn.

Nature has her appropriate setting for the scene of man's actions. But her subtle irony is reserved for

those occasions when by her setting she sways the moods of man, and so fits him the more for a crisis of events—fits him or unfits him. The enchantments of the scene Rose gazed on worked in with the very warp and woof of her emotions, and threw a new glamour over the unframed river of hope that flushed her. It suspended the critical faculty in her—which she was not lacking in, though it took rather the form of perception than analysis—and it swung her into mysticism of desire.

Thus when she turned to her bed presently, a subtle change had passed over her, a quick, eager change like the pressing of a kiss on the lips of woman. The Feminine in her—that keen rebirth of social experience and human complexity—had purposed a circum-spect analysis. But a child of quick emotions was she, and the night had come to dispel that. For, as presently she fell asleep, deliciousness and richness folded her, and her whole being looked forward to the Wednesday night's meeting.

## XI

IT was not otherwise with Richard Webber. Hitherto he had been approached by whatever fairy wielded Love's wand along more conventional lines, and therefore his castle of self had been attacked on a side for which he was readier and apter for defence. The fact that he had hitherto been so attacked had not, indeed, rendered him impervious to such attacks (he was, by nature, susceptible), but it had rendered the results of such attacks of shorter and shorter duration. The waves of emotion begot by the impact were wont quietly to die down into a calm sea.

But this attack had been delivered on an entirely different quarter. Nothing of the conventional was there about Rose. Her curious directness disarmed him, while her simplicity of emotion spoke to the highest in him. Her native directness of mind well-nigh awed him at moments, while her curious helplessness of experience touched his heart; one made him her inferior and the other her superior, and the mixture of emotion was delicious if confusing. Her beauty, too, hovered on his horizon of romance. The beauty that shone in the drawing-rooms was full of hard glitter beside this. The thought of fleshy voluptuousness was mingled in her with the thought of spiritual transcendence.

By her, politeness had been touched in him to kindness and the eagerness of thoughtfulness, while common courtesies had been quickened to chivalry. He already set up a standard of faithfulness to her that was, at least, curious. For when he failed on demand to bring up before his eye the face and fashion of her, he reproached himself, and in a wild effort to recapture the picture drove it further and further away.

Even his uncle noticed his strangeness. He said to him at dinner on the Monday—

“What’s all the talk knocked out of you for? Short of cash?”

“No. Oh, no.”

“Thought perhaps you were; and were afraid to ask. Because, anyway, your behaviour’s damn’ rum.”

“Is it? Oh, well, it’s not that. Not more than usual, that’s to say. I’m always that, you know.”

“H’m! So used I to be. Still, there’s no occasion for it, and there’s no reason on earth that I can see why you should make a damn’ fool of yourself, even if it did. Anyway, remind me in the morning, and

I'll put a cheque to your credit. Only, for Heaven's sake, Dick, don't mope, whatever's the reason. By the way, are you free on Wednesday?"

"Wednesday? Wednesday?" Dick endeavoured by repetition to cover the fact that his inmost thought had been pierced, although he knew it had been unwittingly pierced. "Yes, I think I am. Why, is there anything on in particular?"

"Only the Trevishams are coming over, and they always rile me."

"I'm sorry, uncle, but I'm afraid I'm engaged."

"Oh, very well. It's no very great odds."

## XII

HE was there first. He had been pacing up and down impatiently for some time before a flutter at his side and a hand on his arm acquainted him of her arrival.

"I thought perhaps you weren't coming, and I was beginning to get keenly disappointed. I am glad you've come."

"I'm sorry to be late," said she, "but I was kept on one thing or another. I never get out to time. I'm a nurse-governess, you know." She had determined to get this said early, for his complete enlightenment as to her social station; and she said it with firm mind though with misgiving blood.

He heard her, but waived the picture it raised from before his eyes. Moreover, his sudden rush of gladness and ecstasy at the renewed sight blotted it imperiously away. Such distinctions belonged to the valley, and he stood now on a mountain.

"I'm glad you've come, though," he said again.



"But it's too unfair of them to keep you. You have your hours, and they ought to recognize them."

"They never do. I thought perhaps you would be gone."

She had indeed thought so, and in consequence had sped to the appointed place of meeting with more of fear in her heart than she would have cared to confess frankly, though she endeavoured to face and know herself in the moments between ecstatic submission to the new tides that swept through her. Her instincts were always, and had become, now particularly, older than her emotions, but her emotions were the more potent.

"Oh, I waited," said he, "because I felt you were not of that kind that make pledges to evade them."

She looked at him with mild surprise and wonderment at his meaning. Being alien to her experience no less than to her nature, the fact, nay, the reason, of such faithlessness failed to penetrate her consciousness. He, quickly perceiving an unconscious yet grave mishap in presenting his experience in Cupid's more errant and tortuous ways before so frank a soul as this, quickly said:

"You said you would be here, therefore I knew you would be here, and so I waited."

They had turned as though on instinct, and were walking down towards the town. But, as they did so, there came over the first flush of his ardour and joy the quick riveting consciousness that he was known in the town. "If any should see me," said his mind to itself, "they will probably think strange things of her," so putting his moving reluctance down to instinct and chivalry. Yet the better man, because the honester man, in him arose, and he faced the issue with some frankness, that he did not, for his own com-

fort's sake, desire to be seen with Rose in the town.

"Excuse me, but don't you think, as it's so early yet, that we might go out into the country first."

"If you like," said she.

### XIII

THE difference between ridicule and the fatefullest tragedy is but one of parallax. A step this way, and that which threw up the eyebrows in astonishment, sending the lips leaping to and fro in quick risibility, becomes one of dark interest. It is a commonplace to say that the theme of the comic muse is no less than the theme of her fatefuller sister, or that the distinction in their functions is one of standpoint and predisposition. But it is a somewhat more complex consideration, and one not so easy to perceive, that for a mood that would wrest the mysteries of character to be set with a flickering lip of laughter, or to have the deep seas of its mind rippling with merriment, is to be preordained to failure. It is to be more: it is to gather an essential misconception of the thing it would depict.

Similarly, the picture of two healthy beings roaming country lanes as the sun sank low, with no fixed occupation, neither one feeling quite sure of the other, with a conversation that in consequence flagged too continually, and drooped its wing into the depths of uneasy silence, is one that the contented mind views with sound hilarity. It tempts laughter.

Yet, even so, at that time they were developing themselves into attitudes that were to be full of portent for the future. He, not less than she, though he was older and of maturer experience, was taking

his shape, and this shape, like all such shapes, was to be the start of a development along those lines. He more than she, for she was taking her first mould while all was yet plastic about her; he, however, was something past the plastic stage, though temporarily made more malleable by the wonder-surge of emotion she had induced in him.

He had, however, overcome his initial awkwardness by the adoption of a kindly and painstaking courtesy that thrilled her inexpressibly. It was with quiet dignity he aided her over stiles; and once when, as she came over a stile her dress caught, displaying a fair proportion of comely and shapely limb, he quickly, yet not so quickly as to be ostentatiously, turned away while she adjusted the offending garment. Moreover, it was done with such evident kindness, yet withal with such dignity, that she warmed to him with trust.

As they roamed quietly beside one another, while large evening spread its plumes above their heads, he came very close to her, and unostentatiously slipped his arm beneath and within hers, feeling the soft touch of her warm arm thrill through his blood. It is the tentative temper of the world that reads voluptuousness as in itself an evil thing. It was no evil thing to him then. There surged through his nerves an overwhelming tenderness as he felt his arm stiffened between her side and her arm with the quick convulsive tremor of swift emotion in her. Neither of them looked at the other as his fingers crept down her arm toward her hand, which, when it reached, it took into possession.

To her the intensity of emotion was almost uncontrollable. She knew not if she walked on earth or air. Her blood beat confused anthems in her ears. Her eyes dismissed their functions, and painted vast

images of richest colour before her. The mysteries of ages ran in her veins. She could have clung to him convulsively in a wild, wild ecstasy of fierce joy, save that some memory of an elder self, a self that had not known this wild riot of uncontrollable desire surging in her, forbade so abandoned an evidence of her emotion. It was, therefore, to relieve a mood that bade fair to overwhelm and conquer all control, that she let droop her arm, so relinquishing possession of his.

He construed this as apathy on her part, and felt puzzled at the ways of woman, not knowing how to construe this in the light of her undeniable emotion of but a few moments back.

"May I not take your arm?" he asked, looking down at the rich hues tinting the pure profile of her face.

"If you like," she whispered, inconsequentially, as it seemed to him.

"You wish me to?" he asked, with a slight feeling of mastery.

"Yes," she whispered back, softer than before.

Emboldened by this, instead of taking her arm, he slipped his arm gently about her waist, and she surrendered herself to him. He held her close to him as they stumbled rather than walked forward. Presently he stopped, and, folding her in his arms, stooping slightly, kissed her averted face. She shrank away convulsively. The touch of lips was purest joy to him, but it well-nigh maddened her. She trembled in his arms. He knew not why she trembled, but as she had not forbidden him, he kissed her again, more passionately. Then with a quick motion she swung on him, and, throwing her arms about his neck, kissed him wildly and convulsively. Neither spoke.

Evening was turned almost to twilight ere they separated. The air was warm and rich. In the west, through the aurora thrown up by the departing sun, Venus struggled through with light ray of silver; while, fronting her in the opposite heavens, a large rounded moon swam softly up through the darkening sky. Peace was over the earth as, with his arm about her, they turned to the town again.

#### XIV

IPSTOWE threw out rich lights before them as they made their way through the darkened hedgerows. The air glowed golden in the night sky, showing strangely beside the silver glory of the moon that floated to the right of the town as they trod towards it. Strangely, and somewhat murkily too. The silver splendour flowing from an opal sky over fields that lay in pale blue slumber, made the red gold of the town lights, that had otherwise seemed sumptuous enough, shine like faded tinsel. Nor was this diminished in any way, increased rather, by the dark blocks of the nearer houses that shut out the town lights in spaces with masses of chaotic gloom. To right and left of them, as they floated up by the nearer hedgerow, purity and garishness fought their fight out in the heavenly horizon.

Half-consciously they recked of this (he more than she) in the swelling tide of their emotions. They had found speech now, and were twittering a first soft inconsequential chorus.

"Dear, that was the richest joy of my life," said he, vainly seeking to shake off consciousness, as it was obvious the burning soul beside him had done.

"Richard," whispered she, eschewing the "Dick."

"Rose," he replied, as she clung closer to him.

Ecstasy waved over them as again they floated the seas of silence and mystery. He was the first to recover speech.

"Who would think," said he, "we had met only so short a time?"

"Dearest!" she whispered, afraid of her voice. She would not be reminded of it.

"It seems as if we had always known each other, doesn't it?" He kissed her as he spoke, which forestalled a reply from her, other than the rich one of answering lips.

"Yet you do love me, don't you?" The "yet" had a cause in his mind that was not in hers.

"Oh, Richard, yes," she said, and with a sudden advent of boldness she turned on him for an equal kiss.

He was tempting her forth from her fastnesses now; and though slowly, yet it was in native strength she came.

"It seems strange, doesn't it? But it's true," he added.

"Dear!"

"Oh, Rose, Rose!" he called, in joy of her name.

"Richard!" she whispered back.

It thrilled him that she found a new name to call him by: it was a token to him of a new order of things; his fancy, on a quick flash, took it for a calling of realities by their true appellations, which, he swore, was henceforth to be the law for him. Only on the great events of his life had he been called Richard: yet then it was formal pomp; now pomp was thrilled to reality.

They passed then to that state when words were no more heeded for the meanings they gave, but were

of value only inasmuch as they gave each the opportunity of hearing the other in sound whose intonation was all. Ejaculations had sufficed, so they were musical. Their souls were finding voice in struggling chords and notes of broken music. The theme was a theme for music, having passed beyond the bounds of articulate meaning.

"Darling!"

"Dearest!"

"Oh, how I love you!"

"Do you?"

"Infinitely."

"You know I do."

"I'm proud to know you do."

"I'm very, very happy."

"I never knew love till now."

"Dearest."

"You make me my real true self."

"Oh, Richard!"

It was he who had started, though for a while their parts might have been inverted so far had they merged identity. Yet he struggled to self-consciousness sooner than she.

With infinite slowness they had come nearer the town, till now it was almost upon them. Its lights dispelled the mystic spell that had awed their souls, though they still clung to ecstasy.

Taking his arm from about her waist he passed it under hers as they trod the main street under the maze of lights that dazzled them. Some five minutes down on the right hand would they find the street that would take them to the place of parting, and so thrilled was he that he forgot his earlier reluctance to the publicity of this main street. Indeed, he trod firmly, with his hand over hers, she as close to his side as the limits

of walking permitted. His thoughts were of her, and if somewhat of himself too, then only in his relation to her. A new life flooded his veins, and rocked his brain in ecstasy.

Presently, however, he had the consciousness of curious eyes regarding him, and turning in that direction he saw an acquaintance of his in the town taking off his hat as he passed them close. He plucked off his own in response.

Walking on, discomfort and disturbance ruled in him. Imperceptibly he loosed her hand, and soon slid his arm out of hers for an ostensible waving of his pocket silk, yet did not return it to its position. She, in full tide of joy, swayed to her deepest of emotion, made response by quickly slipping her arm in his; which caused disturbance and ecstasy to mingle a strange combat in him.

Nevertheless, it was not for long. For soon they turned into the seclusion of side streets. Whereat he was relieved; he knew he was relieved, yet had not so far lapsed from his splendour of emotion not to feel somewhat ashamed of his relief. She too had come down from the heights, but to no bathos. Her whole being swung wide to embrace the largeness of life she had found, and to turn it into the full joy of experience and simplicity.

Then came the moments of parting. And as she sped up the street through the darkness, with her warm kiss living on his lips, he knew her, and blest her, for a pure, lovely soul.

## XV

HAVING lost sight of her, he turned, and, with confused emotions, made back again towards the main



street. By that way lay his journey home. Passion knows not Time, and mocks at its effluxion. As with her, so with him, it seemed mockery to say that they had known each other so short a time. Yet it was her passion that had so transmuted occasion. Had his initial kiss fallen on a cheek accustomed to such pressure of lips, valuing such tribute as a byway of experience, a dalliance with furtive pleasure had ensued, and this strange ruling aside of the common boundaries of Time had not resulted. But Passion, a virginal, pure, and lovely passion, had greeted him, which by its own strength had lifted him to something of loftiness of desire.

Yet, strangely it was rather he than she who had lost the reckoning of Time. She knew, somewhere in the forefront of her mind, that their knowledge of each other had been for but a short time, yet found nothing strange or bewildering in it. That they had met, and loved, was to her the supreme fact. And that she felt she had ever known him, despite so short an acquaintance, was only as it should be.

He, however, was definitely out of his reckoning both as to events and time. He was bewildered by his sudden and complete knowledge of her. Overjoyed and thrilled, he was yet unable to realize this complete unveiling of soul that had taken place.

Thus confused and thrilled, flushed with a wild tenderness, yet unable to locate himself, he turned from the seclusion of side streets, and made his way up through the blaze of lights, that diminished as the night wore on, towards the countryside that lay farthest removed from the lanes that had late been his holy of holies, tender with memory.

As he went on, a voice sang in his ear—

“Hullo, Webber!”

Facing about he saw the smiling face that had discomposed him earlier in the evening.

"Hullo, you!" he said, with forced jocularly, covering a swift awkwardness.

"Didn't I catch you courting a while back?" went on his awkward interlocutor, perceiving the discomfort and rejoicing infinitely in it. "Who's the party?"

Richard looked discomposed enough, and a quick flush came into his cheek; but he endeavoured, in a moment of folly, to turn this into an appearance of perplexity. At this the other set up a soft laugh, gentle, modulated and mellow, like a caress of torture.

"Oh, like that, is it?" said he. "Well, old chap, I wish you luck."

"Hang it, Ogden, you've a horrible mind, you know!" Richard broke out, endeavouring to rescue the situation and cut his interlocutor short by a show of brusqueness.

"I? Well, I like that." Ogden simulated extreme astonishment.

"Well, so you have."

Ogden flung his eyes heavenward, and, with hand extended in expostulation, said—

"You heavens, hear and judge between us! I wish this man all imaginable luck in his love, and he interprets me with evil intent. Who is it has the evil mind?"

Ogden's gay manner, and his mock conjuring, brought good humour with a swift rush upon Richard, and he broke in on the invocation.

"Drop that! It's because I know the frame of your mind, that I interpret you evilly. But let's quit the subject!"

"Oh, no, you don't! I wish to know, my dear sir, is this a *flamme* or the *belle idéale*?"

"What's it got to do with you, may I ask?"

"Oh, since you put it that way, nothing! Still——"

The shrug of his shoulders was clear enough proof to Richard that the other was drawing his own conclusions. To have been assailed in this way before having even so much as taken stock of himself and his emotions, was disconcerting. To have put him at a disadvantage in his replies, to have made him cut a sorry figure with one that regarded him as immaculate gaiety and courtesy, was the least of the trouble, for it brought havoc in the state of his soul. It set worldly position with a swift and unerring hand beside the new emotion that had stirred purely within him. He sought for dry land in a sea of chaos, but could find nowhere to set his feet on and stand firm. Yet it was incumbent on him to say something, if only to unsettle the conviction his friend was assuming. What this conviction was he could not say. Yet, whatever it was, it could not fail to be awkward. His soul revolted from an evil interpretation, yet his instinct no less shrank from any interpretation that compromised him socially.

Regaining possession of himself with a firm energy of will he said therefore—

"My dear old chap, what blather this all is! Just because you happen to see me with a friend of mine you go sprinting off to conclusions. It's an idiotic thing to do."

This was said firmly and quietly, and the tone and manner of saying it was a sure signal flung out to Ogden that the subject was not to be persisted in. Gentleman to gentleman, this signal was not to be disregarded. Yet though the signal of convention fluttered in the wind imperiously, the man in Ogden was urgent in him. So he merely laughed again, the soft

silvery laughter of non-conviction, and with a too obviously abrupt turn he said—

“Ah, yes! Rum shape those stars have!” He regarded Cassiopeia’s chair.

They trod in silence awhile, then separated.

Late into that night Richard lay and tossed, seeking to co-ordinate his experiences, and find dry earth of decision. But it defied him.

## XVI

MOTHER-WIT has achieved the notoriety of an adage. Apothegm has fastened on it knowing it an inalienable portion of humanity. Let it not be thought, however, that mother-wit is one with wisdom. Indeed, it is too often the destroyer of wisdom. Wisdom may work out her own ends in darkness. It may be content to strike through twists and torsions, scarcely perceiving them, to a far goal that shines clearly beyond the gloom. But mother-wit must needs perceive the twists and torsions; may, indeed, perceive them so clearly as to obscure all eventual goals. It, too often, will seek to make straight the twists and remedy the torsions, and so destroy all striving obscuring, if not obviating, the goal. Wisdom is compact of patience; mother-wit is too often overcome by irritability and impatience. Let them be wed in harmony, and wisdom earns her crown of joy.

They had not been so wed in Mary Foggetty. Her quick mother-wit had not failed to note Rose’s gleaming eye and joyous manner. It rejoiced her; and at the same time disturbed her, for it meant that something had come into her life that the mother was stranger to. She waited to learn; and only learnt in-

stead that Rose's visit this Sunday was to be somewhat curtailed. Mary knew not whether or not to connect the radiant manner and the curtailed visit; but waited again. It was not easy to wait; the more so as Rose's manner of announcing the curtailed visit was flushed and, it must be admitted, not altogether frank.

Frankness is an easy thing to stipulate; yet the wise know that it is dependent on condition. Perfect frankness is dependent on perfect sympathy; and the first thing the human soul is doomed to discover in the toils of experience is that sympathy is a thing that falls from the blue heavens; it is accountable to none, and mocks at the bonds of consanguinity. Love may exist without sympathy; and it may even chance that sympathy may exist without love.

Rose loved her mother; yet her own instinctive recognition of facts would have denied the possibility of deluding herself with any fancy that sympathy existed between them. For one thing she was achieving her own conscience; that is to say, her divine instinct of conscience was codifying its own experience, whereas her mother's had been codified long since in a far different field. Her conscience approved her love for Richard, because her love trusted him infallibly; but she knew her mother's conscience would not have approved, trust or no trust. She recognized, too, that her mother was only human in erecting her conscience as the standard of all possible consciences. Wisdom dictated, therefore, that a collision be avoided.

Had Mary recognized this, Rose might have been saved evasion. But she, poor soul! was all fretfulness to know how her seedling fared, and must need pluck it up by the root to discover. She waited awhile; and as information was not forthcoming, plied Rose with

questions. She started subtly; and the field was clear, for Andrew employed his Sunday afternoons by leading small rustic intelligences through the labyrinths of prophecy, his method being not to avoid the heavy terminology this necessarily included, but to elucidate as he went forward by baby phrases in involved syntax; his whole performance bearing a marked resemblance to an elephant attempting a schottische.

Mary endeavoured to discover what she wanted by detailed curiosity as to Rose's daily happenings, and failing to learn anything more of them than she had hitherto known, she turned away for a swift flank attack. She leapt up with a bounce and said—

"Well, my dear, I must be thinking of getting tea ready."

"But why so early, mother?"

"Why, Rose, you said you would have to be going early, and so you will want tea early, won't you?"

"No, mother, I'm not going so early as that. It won't affect tea-time, anyway."

"Well, no, I suppose it won't." As she spoke she flicked imaginary dust off a glass vase with her handkerchief so as to lend inconsequence to her words. "But you didn't say who you were going to meet, Rose."

"Meet, mother?" Rose sniffed danger, and fenced to avoid falsehood.

"Yes, dear, meet. I suppose you're going to meet somebody."

"Of course I am." She let the words ring freely.

"You didn't say who, Rose." Mary lifted her eyes and looked injuredly at her daughter for a moment, and then drooped them again with a resigned pressure of her lips.

"Mother, don't be silly," said Rose, with a half-

pout, half-tender regard, seeking to meet injury with expostulation. "If I told you, how much wiser would you be?"

"You don't trust me as you should, Rose."

"Of course I trust you, mother."

"No, you don't, dear."

Rose came over and laid her hand on her mother's shoulder, saying in a not too happy raillery—

"Why, look, mother, suppose I said Molly Maguire, or Janey Pickwick, or any other name, why, you wouldn't even know if they existed or not."

"I should rely on you telling me the truth, Rose."

This was a thrust that robbed Rose of reply; and Mary might have followed with effect, but just then Andrew came in humming a sprightly children's hymn at largo time, to the destruction of all its would-be gaiety; to which destruction he further assisted by rendering it in sepulchral tones.

"Rose has to be going early to-day." Mary always fell into the Suffolk "song" if she had to speak to any one at a further remove than mere conversation.

"Oh," said Andrew carelessly, ceasing his unearthly music. "Where is she going?"

"She doesn't say."

"Where are you going, Rose?"

"Oh, I never heard such a fuss in my life over so small a thing. Only to meet a friend of mine. It's the same friend I meet every Thursday." This was floating perilously near deliberate falsehood, for she had often spoken of a girl she used sometimes to meet. But she shrank from a straight falsehood to conclude the matter; whereas they (her mother as yet, rather) seemed intent on pressing her to falsehood.

"A nice girl, I hope, Rose," said Andrew, in dismissal of the matter.

"Very nice."

"Will you ask her to tea here some Sunday?" asked Mary.

"I may," replied Rose.

Mary left the matter; but it was too evident to Rose that her mother was disturbed and suspicious, and this ruffled the clear waters of her joy. No more was said on the matter; but her mother's avoidance of the subject was so marked and obvious that to poor Rose an open discussion had been less ominous.

## XVII

It was lamentable that Mary should have levelled so shrewd an attack on Rose, for it drove her to furtiveness. Had Mary discovered that Rose had found herself a lover, learning with it the distinction in social degree that existed between them, she would have forbade the whole matter in peremptory fashion, while Andrew's heavy artillery would have brought up crushing support. Rose was scarcely the girl to have bowed meekly to such an attack. All that was best and worthy in her would have stood up in faithfulness to her lover. She would snap all lighter bonds, and own as resistless this new and heaven-got mandate that had sprung on her. Denial, if denial had been demanded of her, she would have deemed as joy. This Mary well knew. Yet so is human nature compact of paradox, even had she known this, even had she foreseen and dreaded so dire a consequence, it would not have deterred her course of action.

But she had not discovered. Yet even here mischief ensued. For Rose, instinctively fearless and honest, had been pushed to falsehood and furtiveness.



As she left home that evening she left it watchful. As she passed through Oldhamlet, and crossed the fields that intervened between the town and the station, she trod them firmly, but she was careful to see that none followed. She knew that something of Jesuitical precept marked the ways, though not the doctrines, of her mother: who would have judged her love for her daughter, and her regard for her welfare, as sufficient justification for a crafty following of her.

But the path behind was clear, and already she saw a courtly figure that strode restlessly up and down beneath the lengthening shadow of the station, and the swift joy that ran through her veins left her in no doubt as to who this was.

As he saw her he came quickly forward, and a sudden shyness came on her, that was trustful withal.

"I'm before you again, you see!" said he.

"I'm not late, am I?"

"No; punctual to the minute." He scanned his chronometer without regarding what it said. "But I'm early because I've been looking forward all the week to seeing you again. I am glad to see you."

Genuine joy made music of his voice. To such a sight as she was now, what were all the cavillings of all the Ogdens that the world possessed? She made him a man again; and his spirit flung a challenge to all and sundry, defying them to rob him of his felicity, or cause a spirit of shame to dull the beauty of his love.

She too had hungered for a sight of him; but since he had spoken she said nothing. She was glad to leave him the honour of speaking the necessary, content with the fact in herself.

If he had imagined that this peaceful Sunday even-

ing (the very birds were conscious of the Sabbath calm, and modulated their songs accordingly) was to go the way of the previous Wednesday, he was mistaken. Anticipation had prepared his blood for the soft thrills of moving lips and ecstatic caresses. So, too, had her own anticipation dwelt on the occasion. But her mood was now full of the discomfort her mother's probings had produced; and she spoke of it, simply yet questioningly.

"Did you tell them anything?" he asked.

"Oh, no!"

Why, he knew not, but a dark anxiety fell from him as she spoke these words. He avoided that theme.

"But we're not doing wrong in loving, are we?" he asked, dwelling softly and tenderly on the word "loving," accompanying its gentle breathing with an eager look and a pressure on the hand in his possession.

She looked her mute astonishment.

"Of course we're not." He interpreted her attitude, and brushed the obstruction away thus.

She did not admit the right of any to know or interfere: this was the natural attitude of her mind; a matter past all objection or cavil, to be recognized as a fact of nature. He, however, did: therefore, in contradistinction to her attitude of quiet strength, he was driven to argument and casuistry.

"Our affairs are our affairs, aren't they? I love you—dear—and you love me; that is our universe. Nothing else can enter. Our love is its only law. Oh, dear, I do indeed count your love a thing to be proud of. It is the highest honour I know; nor do I forget to recognize it as this." He flew to eloquence in the intensity of a passion that he stamped real and gave a run to.

It rang like sweetest music in her ears; and so they passed the sands and shallows of circumstance out on the broad billows of undisturbed felicity.

## XVIII

BUT though they might forget it thus easily, it was not so quickly erased in another quarter. It ate its way into Mary's restless mind. It was more than suspicion to her; it had become stamped with absolute conviction. It had been no more than an irritating suspicion until Rose had begun to avoid her questioning. Mother-wit had flown high then, calling loudly through her mind of certainty. At Rose's adroit use of her father's abstraction, this calling had become a tumult.

After the evening meeting, therefore, which Andrew himself had taken, ignoring the obvious fact that certain subtle phrases he had happened to use were ringing delightedly through his mind, she took the matter up with him. Andrew reclined in his habitual chair with a placid smile about his face, that the evilly disposed might have dubbed a smirk of self-satisfaction. Ostensibly he was reading a weekly journal that circulated through an elect but undistinguished coterie. That is to say, his eyes regarded the printed page. His mind, however, had disassociated itself from any visual impressions his retina endeavoured to communicate along the nerves: it had before it a far more complacent picture of solemn and wondering eyes that had lately regarded him as he had trod his verbal labyrinthine way, postured as a platform before them. Sundry rows of whispering and woefully inattentive youngsters on the far fringes did not belong to the

picture. It was the nearer picture that was productive of the spiritual complacency.

Mary knew this: she had not observed him for nigh twenty years of married life for naught. She knew, too, that this made the present moment most inauspicious for the broaching of so important a matter. But what can you? With a restless soul and an urgent theme occasions are not auspicious or inauspicious, but merely imperative. So Mary found it.

"Andrew," said she, "do you think Rose is falling into bad ways?" She had not meant it quite thus, but let it pass at that.

"Dear?" said he in query, glancing absently at her.

She looked at him half in weariness, half in anger. Since Rose's cleavage from her home they had drifted further apart than ever, though, indeed, he knew nothing of this.

"Don't you feel anxious about Rose?"

"Anxious?" he asked.

"I wish, Andrew, you would now and then give me some of your attention. I can never discuss any subject of anxiety with you."

"You're a little irritable this evening, I think, Mary," said he, with a smile that was gentle merely because it purported so to be. Having said so much, he lapsed into his sense of luxury again.

The waters of poor Mary's anxiety grew doubly troubled at the chafing of soul this caused her. But she was determined to exchange her thoughts and doubts with this her partner in Rose's cause of being. So she returned to the attack.

"Andrew, you *must* listen. It was you who were chiefly responsible in sending Rose out of the home where she properly ought to be. You know I didn't want it; but you forced it by what you call argument,

but what *I* call making up your mind beforehand."

"Mary, we needn't go into these details."

"No; perhaps I'm wrong. But, Andrew, I'm worried. I've fretted ever since she went away, and I've been looking out for trouble. I felt sure it would come. And now to-day I've felt most unhappy."

She quivered on the verge of tears—tears, if induced by fretfulness as much as by a torturing spirit, yet tears nevertheless, and therefore pitiable. She curbed herself, however, like one accustomed to the intensity of self-restraint.

"But you didn't say anything special had happened to-day. *Has* anything transpired?" "Transpired" was an echo from the earlier evening, but neither noticed it.

"Yes, and no," she replied, a little fearful of putting the findings of her airy instinct before the wider intelligence of a male, a male, moreover, versed in dogmatic insistence. "But to-day, for the first time, Rose failed to take me into her confidence; and her manner was strange—I know it was strange."

"Oh! But what in? I didn't notice anything, my dear. But then perhaps it was before I came in."

"No, it was before you." His eyes flicked with a slight surprise at so amazing a fact. "What do you think she went early for to-day?"

"Why, to meet this friend of hers,—what's her name? Emily, wasn't it? She said so."

"No, that's just it. She didn't say so; but she let us think it. And Rose has never done a thing like that before. Don't I know? I'm not her mother for nothing."

"I think, my dear, you're making much out of very little, I must say."

"I knew you would say that." Mary's head jerked

indignation. "But you don't feel; you just think, and that after everything's over. I feel; and I'm fretting to know what Rose wanted to do this evening that she wouldn't let her mother know about. You mark me, Andrew, if she doesn't want to give up coming here on one of her monthly holidays next."

"If you thought that, why didn't you speak to Rose about it?"

"Oh, you don't know Rose, not as I do. That would just drive her to secrecy and stubbornness. We should never have let her go out to Ipstowe; I'm more sure of that every day." Little though she knew it, the maternal instinct in Mary, sound and sane in its hour and occasion, had worked itself into that most essential of all forms of selfishness, the desire to live one's life in another. It was this that spoke now. She would have had Rose ever by her side, for her own sake, not for Rose's. And this despite the fact that something of genuine anxiety for Rose was part cause of her present fretfulness.

Andrew skirted the tender subject.

"Shall I write to her?" he asked.

"What good would that do?"

"Mary," Andrew sat up stiffly in his chair as he spoke, "I must object to your taking me as inferior in dealing with our child. I am concerned in her welfare as you are. I shall write to her to-morrow lovingly and wisely, counselling her to wisdom and the care of God. I shall refer to nothing particular, but shall let her gather the cause of my letter. I shall do this to-morrow."

This was his dismissal of the subject, and she betook herself off to the preparing of supper in not the peace fullest of humours. He made an effort to return to his sweet reflection; but failed dismally; so

took to reading the print in genuine earnest, owing her a grudge therewithal.

## XIX

THERE is an experience that is grandmother to us all. Much of her wisdom has she framed in saws and apothegms, which thereby have come to wear the name of grandmotherly maxims. Yet in most of such can be traced the result of some far-off inductive generalization (with often all the faults of inductive generalizations) fitfully struggling for colloquial expression. Such is the saw "It never rains but it pours." Truly this only means that the impact of occasion having been given to circumstance, waves of action are set up that tend to arrive at their several crises simultaneously. Not that it should be so because it has been said so: but rather it is said so because it has often been so.

Deductions are not drawn from the fact: the grandmotherly experience merely states her fact as thus, and leaves her mortals to deduce what they may. She merely says that crises in human experience tend to arrive together, and therefore they are to be dismissed the more rapidly. Therefore the issue is to the strong of will and the strong and resolute of intention.

Thus the resolute will is all things; and an insecure sentimentality is deadly. In Richard's case, however, the resolute will had not yet been achieved; and it must be admitted that on the ebb of emotion the sands of his mind had been washed by frail waters of sentimentality that lackeyed the ruling winds. During that week, succeeding to the high emotion that the Sunday's meeting with Rose had achieved in him, he had

been wrought to a fervour of chivalric nobility by his reminiscence of her loveliness and the pure strength of her mind; alternating to presages of doubt, haunting questions as to where this all would lead. For her very strength and purity of intention, while it charmed him, inspired him with something of fear. It dismissed all worldly aspects and considerations from his mind, that afterwards crept in with taunting finger, mocking him.

When aroused by his own mind, he fought them awhile fearfully; and then, seeing he could not be victor of them, he dismissed them, and determined to tread in the ways of delight regardless of their destination to him or to her. This, though cowardly enough, yet kept his mind free of despair, with all the evil of intention that despair is too ready to prompt.

His own mind, however, was not the only assailant. Ogden regarded what he considered his honourable obligation to Richard in the very discipline of the letter; but departed woefully from it in spirit. "I say," he would say to one or another, "would you consider old Dick a proper receptacle for the fires of Love?"

"Dick?" would come the reply. "You don't say Dick's in love?"

"Oh, I don't say anything. Now, my dear chap, *did* I say anything? I just ask you, *did* I?" And then would ensue a lifting of the brows, and a high-pitched rippling merriment that struggled to contain itself.

"I say, let's have the joke, whatever it is. Who's it with?"

"That's the best of it all. My Heavens! But, mum's the word! Not a sound to the wife! But ye gods! The thing's too superb!"



And so he would pass down the street with shaking shoulders.

Or it would be—

"My dear man, in confidence—you know, I'm a kind of medical adviser to Dick, poor old chap! Have you noticed anything the matter with him lately?" A quizzical pucker of the eyebrows that hovered on the verge of laughter that yet essayed a mock gravity, would accompany the words.

"No! Nothing wrong, I hope!"

"Wrong? Good Heavens! Wrong! What an idea! You'd better not let Dick get a wind that you said that."

"What are you driving at, Ogden?"

"Driving at? I never drive at anything. I'm disappointed you should think I drive at things. I just asked you a question."

"There's some joke about that I can't get the location of. What is it, Ogden?"

"Joke? It's no joke, I assure you. Love's no joke, my dear man, that you ought to know by now. It's a damn' serious thing."

"Love! Dick in love?"

"There you are, jumping to conclusions again! I never met such a chap."

All this began to gather about Richard like some hydra-headed monster, that put forth an eye to look on him, and then vanished again before he knew where or what it was.

Moreover, about the time that it began to gather way Rose showed him the letter from her father, in which he expressed the hope that she "was choosing her companions wisely"; and that she did not propose to make "any such friendships as her parents would not desire for her." This was said, as he put it, not

that he doubted her, or imagined that she was "departing from the way in which she had been nurtured," but generally as "an expression of trust" in her, and by occasion of such "godly counsel" as it fell to his parental lot to "put before her." It had disturbed her: therefore she showed it to her beloved, and dismissed it in glad confidence in him. She rejoiced in him; not only in her love, but in him, happily and peacefully. He had brought her the wonderlands that her mind had been restive for; and, never having yet tasted of disillusionment, she took this for the completeness that she had yearned for, and found fulness of life in trusting him with the ardent force of a young nature-soul.

But he had not her strength, not her purity of joy, and therefore had moments when a strange and untimely feeling of egregiousness came over him. Moreover, he had been tutored in the ways of worldly sagacity, and began to question the dark brow of the future. Therefore when she abandoned herself to joy, it was with the entire simplicity of faith; while, when he did go, it took more and more of reckless selfishness.

Andrew Foggetty's letter, in this way, thrust him further in dilemma. To her it was a thing beside the mark; the call of a lesser duty beside the greater; and though she determined that the lesser duty should not be forgotten, it should yet not be permitted to interpose any thwarting hand before the greater. But to him it was a rebuke. It challenged his uprightness; and instead of meeting challenge with challenge, he fenced it. He fenced it; and it broke his guard. Time and again it broke his guard. Had he admitted to himself that it had done so, he might then have changed his position to one of better vantage—or even

foregone the fray. But he did not admit it; and therefore each time his guard was broken, more of corruption came to his soul. Once having denied reality to himself, he began to give himself over to a lie.

## XX

No pleasant theme is the progress of corruption in a man's soul. The less so is it when, as in Richard's case, it proceeds with appeals of emotion that were purging and noble.

As they floated by from meeting to meeting, the insurgent question greeted him, What did he intend to do? In wild moments daring entered him. After having come from her warm kisses, and having before his eyes her sensuous yet spiritual and pure beauty, seeing her eyes pierce the darkness, deep with love, wide with glad wonder, and full of implicit faith in him, he determined to dare all for her. He would sit and resolutely sum up all it would mean. For undoubtedly (there could be no question of it) this would alienate his uncle, and he would have to look vainly there for prospective aid or bequest, if indeed he were to be so foolish as to look at all. Though he knew nothing of earning a living, he would essay it, having for slight aid his own very slender monies. In truth, it might have been said that it was his very ignorance that induced the courage. He would do this. Would he not have Rose for reward? And was she not so rich a reward as to outweigh any discomfort or anxiety? In fact, he was to be envied having won her. For she was not only lovely of body, she was lofty of mind. Further, he had often heard it stoutly maintained that to live by one's personal efforts and labour

was the only manly method of procedure. And surely this was so!

But grey morning stript him remorselessly of all such fervour of determination. Moreover, his uncle's breakfast-table, laden with all the fruits and comforts of the earth, dispelled his nightly resolutions to the four winds of the earth. Rose then seemed a strange thing, far away and aloof, and his fervour and wild joy of love a mystery the heart of which was gone.

He endeavoured to recover his freedom by throwing off these thoughts, and relinquishing himself to thoughtless felicity. But this, too, became impossible. Andrew Foggetty's letter met him at all hands, and forced him to perplexity. He only achieved relief by forgetting her deliberately between their hours of meeting, and this was the way to a callousness that had results unhealthy enough. Yet it certainly purchased relief and gaiety.

It was so one gay morning as he strode obliviously up among the matutinal gaiety of Ipstowe High Street. Most of them there he knew, and greetings were exchanged as he took his way among them. It was a market-day, and Ipstowe cherished market-days with all the tenderness of a towny soul. The far cathedral frowned down on the moving peoples from its sunny heights in disapproval of their unworthy emotions. But the peoples little cared, for the cathedral was taken from its awful throne and set on the perch of mere curiosity, on all other than Sundays, but particularly so on market-days.

Lowing cattle passed in herds through the streets sullenly, and bucolic figures with lengthy staffs followed them. Contentment was in Richard as he moved along, for all things induced in him a joyous exhilaration.

But as he moved so, suddenly he saw a sight that

stabbed through him. Rose, with her two charges, was coming down the street towards the day's market-place. She looked bewitching in the morning splendour of day, and his blood ran madly in him at the sight of her. She was dressed simply; instinct had guided her to simple attire, and, as her wise subtlety knew how to don such attire, she always gave the appearance of elegance. But to-day, it seemed to Richard, she seemed beauty made thrice beautiful. She had her charges one by each hand, and Richard could not help but notice, and a glow of incalculable pride stirred in him as he noticed, that she attracted no small degree of attention and admiration as she moved along.

Joy rushed madly through him, but perplexity followed soon after. For her to have won the admiration of the pavement throngers was one thing, but for her to have won the right to associate with them quite another. As soon would they admit a beauteous fawn to intellectual debate. The admiration was touched with condescension, as from one world to another. This he knew, and he knew too that she would greet him frankly and affectionately, though she might not convey in her manner anything more decisive than such frank affection.

She was thirty to forty yards from him, and had not yet seen him. Why put her in an invidious position, thought he. It would certainly not be kind to her, and might even reflect ill on her. It would be awkward for him too, of course: that was to be thought of; but she should be first, and that he should put her in any awkward situation was a thing not to be thought of. His heart's dictate was to take her in his arms and acclaim her before all these people as the purest soul in the world (her loveliness was too apparent to

need his affirmation), for whom he was content to give up all things.

This would be his joy. But for her sake he would deny himself this joy. Therefore, on a flash, he darted into the jeweller's shop beside him, and solaced himself for his loss by buying her a brooch.

When he was come out she had disappeared from view.

As he strode up the street it seemed to his fancy that the sun shone not quite so purely, and certainly the lark's song was not a tithe so joyous. Friends still greeted him, but they distasted him. And it was with considerable annoyance that he saw one of them detach himself from a group and come over towards him.

"Hullo, Jim!" said he.

"I say, Dick, you look out of sorts: what's the matter? In fact, to tell the truth, we've just been betting as to what is the matter with you. Some of 'em say you're in love. Is that right?"

"Love? I?" said Richard, inwardly cursing Ogden, to whom he attributed this as other things that had come on him of a like kind. "Do I look like it?"

"Precisely; that's just what you do."

"Oh, fiddle! You can wash that notion out of your head." He dared not refer to Ogden, or allude to what Ogden had seen, and so he fought at a disadvantage. Moreover, he was irritable.

"You deny it then, eh?"

"Deny what?"

"Why, that Cupid has lodged in you his ruddy dart, or however it ought to go."

"Of course I do. I never heard anything so silly."

"Oh, well, we must accept a man's word. But you certainly look melancholy."

"Tosh!"

"You do. Besides, Ogden——"

Richard turned quickly, and, taking the other by the arm, said—

"Tell Ogden he can go to—you know!"

Then he swung off, while the other went laughing back across the street.

As he strode rapidly away Richard felt he had made a fool of himself.

## XXI

WHEN next they met, and wandered by the hedgerows, he said to her—

"You love me, don't you, Rose dearest?"

"My darling, I do, I do! You're everything to me. You know that, don't you?" She had found tongue this while, and spoke to him in the glad confidence of entire love. As she spoke she put her arms about his neck and clung to him passionately.

As she did so, quick dark thoughts beat through his brain, which he endeavoured to flush over by kissing her equally passionately in return. Nevertheless they were there, and left him, not for the first time, but more potently than ever before, in the toils of wishes that conspired against his better self.

"Of course I believe you, my own sweetheart, only I like to hear you say so."

As he pressed her to him he felt the box in his waistcoat pocket that contained the brooch he had bought for her. He flushed as he did so, and had not the courage to give it her, knowing that it meant the price of his cowardice. Knowing it now as cowardice, the dark thoughts took a more fateful turn in him.

The night was moonless but fine. A gauze of cloud was draped over the stars, that shone behind it like infinite points of suggested light. Darkness was deep on the earth. They themselves had eschewed walking. She leant upon a stile, while he stood beside her now. The night framed her with mystic beauty.

"You have a holiday to-day week, haven't you, dear?"

"Yes," she breathed.

"I was thinking," said he, "we might go away together."

"Darling, you know I should love to, but I think I ought to go home." She clung to that, thinking she had his approval too.

"Would you rather go home than come away with me?"

"Oh, dear, how can you ask that?"

"You make me think it, Rose, if you elect it in preference to coming away with me." He spoke irritably, and it cut her.

"No, Richard, you can't think that, you can't think that. I thought you wanted me to go home. You said so once, dearest, you remember!"

He was rebuked, yet enjoyed the advantage that was gained him.

"Then you will come, dear?"

"Oh, dear, you know I would like to. I'll do as you say. But mother will be grieved, I know. I wouldn't like her to be grieved."

A spirit prompted Richard, and he stepped firmly to ruthlessness.

"I would like it very much, Rose," he said.

"Very well, dear!" She was disappointed in him, the more so as his manner was strange. He had often been strange lately, but she had resolutely refused to



see it. Now all this came back to her, and she shuddered. But she clung to her earlier picture of him, seeing him all beauty, all courage, all rectitude.

"Oh, Rose dear," said he, "I bought just a little present for you the other day: a brooch it is. You won't be able to see it in this light. Look at it when you get home."

And this was he whom she had almost let herself doubt! This was he who had well-nigh seemed dark and strange. How rebuked she felt!

"You are good to me, Richard—very, very good. What can I say? You know I thank you ever so much." Tears were in her eyes.

"Never mind about thanks, sweetheart," said he.

Little did Rose know what a failure in him that gift meant! Not only on the day of its purchase, but on this very night! Earlier, it would have been impossible for him to have given it her. It had been pressed against him as a rebuke. He had intended then hurling it away; it was as a brand of his shame. He would then have insulted no friend of his with it. It was contraband in the estates of nobility. But now he gave it her, and what moved her to tears of remorse and gratitude, was a symbol of his declension of spirit, and consequently of his regard for her.

He was subconscious of this, and turned quickly to the subject of their outing—

"I thought we might go to Rivermouth for the day to-day week."

"Very well," she replied confidently and joyously; "I leave it to you, dearie. I don't care where it is if it's with you. I'll let mother know next Sunday."

"Don't you think—you don't mind my suggesting it, but perhaps, I thought, your mother might make an objection, and so long as we're happy, what does it

matter what others say?—don't you think it would be better to tell them *after* next Sunday?"

It spoke her own thought. Yet it stood before as an evil thing. She shivered.

"No, Richard dear, I don't think—I'd better do that. You know what I mean, don't you, dear? But I won't go home next Sunday, if you like. Before now I've not gone home the Sunday before my whole day."

And so it was arranged. Yet, as she went home, and more as she lay wakeful that night, a strange disturbance swayed her. What this was she could not say. What caused it she knew not; nor was she able to locate the manner of it. In her thoughts she said it was caused by the conflict of duties, to her lover and to her home, in which, to her, there was not, nor could be, choice or hesitation. Nevertheless, despite herself, deep in her inmost self she knew that this disturbance was caused by Richard's own manner to her. Not that his was only irritable. Once or twice he had been so of late, but this had only aroused her womanly tenderness, and she had made him her charge, her nursling. But now, it seemed to her, he was more. She knew not what moved in his mind, but she knew well that something moved in his mind that was not born of the best in him; that was not, in fact, conceived of their love as she had hitherto known it.

Though she brushed it away, the thought remained, aloof but incalculably potent. When she awoke, she had forgotten what it was, but it lay like a distaste on her tongue.

## XXII

HAVING delivered himself of his letter (some of the sentences of which he still nurtured tenderly as being gems of expression) Andrew took up again the even tenor of his ways. He missed Rose, that was undeniable. Yet it would be difficult to say precisely what emotions it begot in him not to know her continually about the place. Indignant repudiation would have fronted that man who might suggest that his emotion was one of very genuine relief: and despair at the abysses of human folly would have greeted any who might suggest that even such very indignation was born of his subconscious knowledge that such a scrutiny was accurate. But relief formed no inconsiderable part of his general attitude. Had the thought of Rose's return ever been mentioned, despair would have seized on him: and he would consequently have pointed out the injustice such a proposal would have done to Rose; human prognosis, and a resolute belief in the preternatural wisdom swaying mundane affairs would have come to his assistance.

For, said he, Mary knew him and understood him: which was his subtle way of saying that her spirit had been crushed out of her, to forestall her contending with him. Rose, however, did not understand him; or, in other words, Rose had not had years of his irrefutable wisdom to crush the spirit out of her. With Mary alone in the house, therefore, his ways were peaceful and serene. With Rose, godliness was balked by contention. Contention, said he, was an evil thing: by which he meant, he liked having his own way. Like most men, he had his mental tricks by which he paraphrased uncomfortable realities into

sleek unction. It was so when he told Mary that it was fit Rose should fare out into the world in order to acquire depth and stability of character: he meant, of course, that he wished her out of the way. In some measure he missed her; but the compensating advantages were too weighty. Had he wished her, of course, he would have dragged her back ruthlessly with some other stock phrase, and with complete justification.

This Mary knew. She knew not the composition of the reef; but she knew its location. And she steered accordingly. This was not worldly wisdom, for there was no advantage in it. Nor was it even the lesser of two disadvantages. It was pitiable submission to an adamant state of affairs. When urgent anxieties beset her, and Andrew escaped to the mountains of contemplation, it reduced her to stony despair. Once it had brought to her a younger and happier gush of tears; now it wrought bitterness in her.

Therefore when she received Rose's first intimation that she would not be home on the Sunday, followed by her later letter conveying the fact that she proposed to spend the following Thursday with a friend, though despair fell on her, she nursed her own trouble. It wrought mischief in her; but Andrew saw nothing of this. He did not even know that Rose was to have been home.

Nevertheless, Mary could not hold her troublous forebodings. They wracked her till they demanded some exchange of counsel. Fruitless she knew it would be: Rose's very letter, which to her was full of restraint, withholdings and unfrankness, would have seemed guileless to Andrew.

"Rose is not coming home next Thursday," she said to him.

"Oh, is that so?" he replied blandly.

Minutes passed, during which fretful time she nursed something very like wrath. Then he said—

"Let me see, that was to have been her monthly holiday, wasn't it?"

"Yes." She spoke grimly.

In her despair and anger she withheld information from him germane to the understanding of the situation: which did not help to simplify matters.

"I suppose her holiday has been cancelled. It isn't always convenient to hold to one day, that I can well understand."

"No, I don't know what she is doing."

"Does she say what she is going to do?"

"Go out with a friend."

"Well, we can't always keep Rose as a child. So long as she chooses her friends wisely,—and that I think she'll do."

She made no reply to his complacency, but fixed him with an eye in which lights of anger darted. He escaped the obvious malignity by peaceful reflections.

They were man and wife, but an abyss lay between them. Meanwhile the clouds of tempest were gathering in bodeful masses over the head of their child.

### XXIII

RIVERMOUTH was a seaside resort that had not yet determined whether to be select or popular. Its endeavours were towards the popular, but the dispositions of Fate seemed inclined to choose for it the propensities of selectness. The truth of the matter was that its popularity came from near, but its selectness from afar.

Visitors from London, coming with fixed intention to keep the rabble aloof (as though their endeavours in this direction in the past had not been crowned with success only too superlatively), chose Rivermouth for retreat. Ipstowe, however, and the countryside about, on all holidays and festive occasions paid pilgrimage to Rivermouth with set determination to be jolly. They took copious parcels and beaming countenances to aid and abet them; and it fared ill for any odious unit that did not, on such occasions, join issue with boredom by the joint assistance of pewter pot and raucous song.

Apart from high jubilees, however, Rivermouth was as silent as the most secluded soul could wish. Set sloping on a hillside, it hung over the sea. Shipping it had none; and was even innocent of a pier. The promenade lay long and, save for the centre opposite the town true and proper, ragged, running at each end into down or warren. It did not cease, that is to say, as it might be imagined a promenade would, but rambled with helpless indecision; warren or down being interspersed with promenade until promenade expired in the complete conquest of down or warren. A semblance was thus given of a town of tolerably pretentious proportions. And as, in human affairs, it is always the covering falsehood that wins the highest praise, this promenade was the boast of Rivermouth.

The attentive promenader would have noticed that the centre portion of this promenade, of about a bow-shot in width, was kept with more than ordinary care. Behind this strip lay Rivermouth town. It was not large. In the winter months its miserable aspect made its proportions seem meagre. But during the summer full streets and festive windows made it swell out with buxom pride. Moreover, in the winter months the

train-service from Ipstowe was a very lethargic affair. In the summer, however, it busied itself considerably while it lasted. It began at a tardy hour, nevertheless, and ceased early; nor could urgent memorials and missives to the railway company alter this lamentable state of affairs. To have the first train arrive at ten, and the last to leave at eight, was to the intelligent Rivermouthian a very disastrous matter.

This was the resort to which Richard brought his Rose.

They came; and in the case of neither was there anything that might have been called gaiety. Rose had summoned up her whole soul to enjoy this day with her beloved. But something, somehow, failed. As before, she sought to attribute this to the fact that she had been compelled to deceive her mother. She did not endeavour to think of it as anything other than deceit; she recognized it so, frankly and freely, but found it sunk in a duty that stood to her complete and high above all others, her duty to her love,—not merely to her lover, but also to her love.

Yet though she did this firmly, it seemed useless for her to try and disguise the fact that Richard did certainly seem strange. A constraint seemed to bind him. Indeed, strange thought! he often seemed as though he were caught in the trammels of a trance. Perplexity he certainly manifested.

Coming down in the train his caresses conveyed this in the very touch of skin on skin, flesh on flesh. He seemed afraid of her touch. He looked no more glowingly in her eyes. His clasp of her seemed either weaker or stronger than before: if weaker, weaker with strange fear; if stronger, stronger with something of ferociousness. It was no longer firm with all deep passion. His kiss on her lips seemed no more warm

and full, but hot and quick—so hot as almost to be cold! so quick as almost to seem spurred! Those tender attentions lacked in him now. Rebellious dark wisps of her hair he had loved to stroke into their place with gentle fingers. Not that they did not look becoming in their hovering profuseness; on the contrary, he had termed them enchanting; but his care of her had found expression in so careful an attention. Now he disregarded them. Instead of great large warmth of love, hot and cold alternated in him. He seemed rather to relish the pressure of her body than the intense nearness of herself. And yet, in the midst of this, he would be caught in the toils of distant, and almost self-reproachful, reflection.

She felt this, and knew not how to account for it. Firm in her faith of him, it caused her, despite the disparity of their years, to rise almost to a motherly regard of him. She had drawn him to her, and caressed him, not so much as lover, rather as child. It was as though a fitful fever had stricken him, and she would soothe it away. And, therewithal, her love for him flew into purer and serener heights, singing a holy hymn through the vast regions of her mind. The effect of this impalpable grandeur of her was to renew in him the perplexity and diffidence that had caught him.

His conversation, too, had swung uncomfortably round the protestation of her love for him. He demanded to know continually of this; and spoke distantly of love being its all-sufficiency. This she never doubted. Love to her was all and in all. To insist on it, to her mind, was to bespeak doubt in the insister's mind. Surely he did not doubt? No, he did not doubt. Far from it, the fact meant everything to him. He was glad she thought so too. As for



him, where love was there was purity, there was honour, there was cleanness. It was its own all-sufficiency. He had flown thus in metaphysic ether, and she but dimly perceived what it all meant. If she understood him aright, then it seemed to her he was labouring the self-evident. At least she could not see what occasion he had to say, and not alone to say, to repeat in strange and mystic phraseology, that man's ordinances were nothing without love, and that, therefore, where love was, man's ordinances were impertinent trifles. Or that the "act of love" (these words were vagueness to her, although he spoke them confusedly), being the true and inevitable outcome of love, was justified if a love anterior to it was rich and complete, and that, therefore, where love was, the "act of love" was not only justified under all circumstances, but was indeed imperative and to be desired. To one more versed in worldly wisdom all this would have sounded perilously like special pleading; but she endorsed all as only too self-evident. Who could deny such obvious propositions? And therefore why trouble to make them? Yet, though she assented to the propositions, soothing and caressing him the while, strange tremors fled through her blood sometimes as he spoke, and at the way he spoke, which she could not define, and which troubled her. Once or twice she had shivered with a sudden rigour.

Now, however, that they were arrived in the town, Richard seemed to throw off his strangeness and his questionings. The day was full and lovely; and they were determined to rejoice in it completely.

Her "whole day's holiday" was rather a travesty of English straightforward meaning, for it was not until the morning was well-nigh over that she ever was released from her duties. It was, therefore, early

afternoon when they arrived, and the first business that met them on arrival was lunch.

What a thing is a worthy meal! To the pure-minded, empty of stomach, filled with the strange exhilaration that such clean fitness produces, it will mean the devastation of joy, high-toned joy, by crude somniferousness. To those to whom a fasting, or pseudo-fasting, stomach has brought irritation and false excitement, it will be the hand of peace, bringing new gaiety of soul and healthfulness of body.

It was this latter effect that was produced in Richard. Striding along the promenade afterwards, his gaiety was so infectious that every evil impression was soon dispelled from Rose's mind, and she gave herself up to the felicity of the occasion. The sea leapt and danced under an eastern blow of wind, and sparkled with gay silver in innumerable points of light over its blue expanse. Up from the world beyond the waves great masses of cumulus clouds were being driven up over the horizon to the zenith of blue heaven; but as they coursed up the arc of azure purity, rolling at first in majestic bulk, they seemed to be stript of their volume, achieving the zenith, if at all, in daintier and more fragile form. Taking advantage of the freshest that blew, yacht and yachtlings chased after white horses, dipping their elegant prows in the midst of a wave to toss it away in signal of victory. White sails danced in the sun, now grey with shadow, now suddenly lit with snowy brilliancy.

Even Richard seemed to throw off himself. As for Rose, she sang out with merry laughter as though to defy care and gloom, with such abandon, indeed, as to bring him confusion. So to the far end of the promenade they went, where there were none to observe them. Sitting on the slope of down, she gave herself

up, not to the love of love, but to the love of life. He felt sharply jealous, indeed, that her happiness seemed not so much to be in him as in the very bliss of living. Yet he could not regard her with any other than pleasure: she was so frankly and freely a thing of Nature. She held his hand as she sat upright gazing on the sea, her eyes glowing with light wonder. All the soul of her that the intricate and commercial wisdom of Man had hedged about, seeking nothing so much as to starve and kill it, chanting in her ear hypocritically the while that it was eternally imperishable, sprang out now and laughed with very glee in the face of a more gracious Heaven.

"Are you enjoying yourself?" asked he, to win the obvious affirmative, and to see of what sort it would be.

"Oh, Richard!" She turned on him with wide eyes. They were porches on the world, and Joy stood in them hailing him.

"It's a beautiful day," he said, with some of his older kindness.

"It's lovely!" Any theme did for a handle for joy to lay hold on. Yet the day was but a fragment of her felicity.

"You're enjoying the day more than me." He spoke with slight reproach.

"I'm enjoying everything; and, of course, you old dear, you're the cause of it all. You've made Life for me, and I'm enjoying it. I am so happy."

"Am I, then, so much to you?"

She regarded him a moment seriously; then laughed out—

"Without you, it would be nothing; nothing! You make it; you give me the heart to enjoy it."

"I'm glad I brought you down." He purposely made as though he misunderstood her.

"Oh, it's not that! It's much, much more than that. It's our love, I suppose. It must be, for, dear, this is Life. This is what I've been wanting. I've never enjoyed myself till now. If Heaven's like this, then I want it!" She laughed out again. She opened her arms, and breathed deep, as though to embrace the god of air. She raised her laughing eyes to Heaven, rejoicing in its snow-strewn fields of azure; and if ever eyes spoke worship, the abandonment of self in Deity, in God, her eyes spoke it then. It was as though her soul grew to new splendour every moment.

He tempted her to the joy of caresses. But she did not so much as see the purport of his meaning. It went by her without touching her thought. It made no impress on her spirit, for she was given up to that utter joy that is the theme of life to each created being. She then touched Life: she lived then her soul-life, untrammelled and untainted; and, though he knew it not, he was essential to it. Without him it would not have been.

They did not note how the hours fled with swift and limber wing. But the fading afternoon made itself known to him; and after consultation of his watch he announced that it was time they saw to the perfunctory business of tea.

"We won't go back," said he; "there's a village over this way that we can go to, where they have a very nice place."

"Oh, you know all about here, then?" she asked surprisedly.

"Oh, yes," he replied.

She remembered this afterwards, and the memory was stinging.

They went on then to this desirable spot, and by the time they reached it, it was bearing swiftly to the hour

of six. Her jollity had perforce then to be less abandoned, for the house of their retreat was seemingly a popular one, and was well stocked with picnickers. Nevertheless, the occasion was sufficiently free, and her joy became stronger because subdued. His manner was awkward and strained, however, and, though she knew it not, his heart was beating a high tattoo on his ribs. He was pale, and avoided her glance. Presently he regarded his watch, and she asked—

"Oh, dear, when does the last train go?"

"Not yet, anyway! It's too early. Why do you ask?"

"Mrs. Sims told me it went early—eight, she said she thought it was. We should have asked at the station."

"It can't be so early as that." He spoke awkwardly.

"Do make sure, dear! Can't they tell you here?"

"Excuse me, but if you're wanting the last train away from Rivermouth"—a voice broke in from an adjoining table—"it goes at eight o'clock."

"I'm obliged to you," said Richard stiffly.

"Oh, we must go, then." Rose jumped up.

"No need to hurry. There's plenty of time." Richard rose too, and leisurely went out with Rose to settle their account, and depart.

"They'll never do it." He who had proffered his knowledge spoke, regarding his watch. "It's after seven now."

When they were without, Rose said—

"You don't think we'll miss it, do you. What's the time now?"

Richard looked at his watch.

"Barely after a quarter to seven," he announced, somewhat needlessly displaying it for Rose to check

the information for herself. "Which gives us plenty of time."

Nevertheless she sped down the road towards the extremity of Rivermouth promenade.

"This is the nearest way, dear, I suppose," said she.

"Quite," he replied, hasting beside her.

It was not.

"But why hurry so?" asked he, with a short awkward laugh.

Anxiety fled her face as she turned with merry laughter to him.

"Why, you dear old thing, suppose your watch is slow!"

"It's not likely to be. Anyway, it would be the first time, if it were."

"Still, I'm worried, dear. Whatever would we do if we missed it!"

He hasted beside her.

Much of the precious time had fled by the time they reached the end of the promenade. They had yet to proceed up the length of this, through the town to its far end. In fact, as is apparent, they were fetching a half-circle towards their destination. Anxiety was supreme in her lest they should miss the train after all.

Nevertheless, such was the pace she made that Richard himself began to conceive misgivings and anxieties: but his were lest, after all, they should catch it. Constantly he consulted his watch; and each time he did so she inquired of him to know how the time fled. So they sped, side by side, at hideous cross-purposes!

But she knew nothing of this. Nothing of irony knew she as she laughed out in the excitement of the race.

Up through the town they sped breathlessly. Rich-

ard's pulse beat a mad fury through his veins. Rose had sunk anxiety in the wild glory of a race against time. They had not noticed that a pall of clouds covered the sky, and that the eastern freshet was now burthened with a light but keen rain.

"That's it, I believe," he called out, as the whistle of an engine pierced the air.

"Oh, never!" she cried, a wild pleading anxiety in her face, that smote him uncomfortably. "There's heaps of time yet."

"There should be," he said, referring again to his watch; "unless, that is, I'm slow."

"It is!" she said, stopping, her voice wrung with tears. The strong steady steam-roars of an engine drawing out a train broke on the air.

"It may not be," he said.

"Oh, but it is." Her spirit was broken.

As they came to the corner they could see the train curving away out of the town; and inquiry elicited the fact that this was indeed the last.

"Oh, whatever shall we do?" she moaned.

"Why, stop here, dear. Let's see if we can't send a wire to the Sims." His was a forced gaiety, and yet not wholly forced.

Her spirit was broken. She said nothing, but clung to his arm.

Wildly the blood beat in his veins. Restraining himself firmly, however, he said again—

"Yes, dear, and lest anybody should make remarks, see—dear, my own sweetheart!—just put this on!"

He fingered in his waistcoat-pocket feverishly, and drawing out a plain gold ring, took her left hand and slipped it on the third finger.

Submissively and dreamily she let him do so. Then she regarded it, and turned her face up to his, wist-

fully and with a whimsical smile. Then suddenly, as she looked in his eyes, her look changed, and she shivered.

"Are you cold, Rose dear?" he asked.

"Ye—s!" she shivered again.

He drew his arm about her, and led her down again into the town.

## XXIV

NIGH two months had passed since that night at Rivermouth, and with them had flown the summer. For some while after, Richard and Rose had met as before, and then he had returned to the theme, begging a renewal, which she had stoutly resisted. Indeed, save in his mind, the subject had seemed forgotten. The Sims, knowing only too well that her services were purchased only too cheaply, had shunned the matter, the more so as she seemed so confused, so contrite and so upset over the affair—disproportionately so, to their thought, and so they commended her conscience. Inquiry had not elicited from her what had happened to her friend in the escapade. Therefore Mrs. Sims came to the ready judgment that Rose's friend had been lightly let off in her employment (wherever that was), and that therefore it behoved her not to appear a hard mistress in comparison. At Oldhamlet nothing had been said, and nothing was known. Yet Mary's perplexity had swollen apace, for Rose was stranger and more aloof with her than ever.

The opening gusts of autumn swept through the city now. It had rained all day, and the streets bore the bedraggled evidences of it. It rained no longer now, but this seemed only due to the fact that the gale of wind had doubled its fury. Around each tree, lining



the roadsides, lay a sodden circle of sere leaves, bidding foot-passengers beware of their tread. The pavement gleamed long and desolate in the lights of the street-lamps.

Despite the fact that a caution was flung out in yellow and dim reds to foot-passengers, there were indeed no passengers, foot or otherwise, to pay heed to it. One only was abroad, standing at the street corner, with a street-lamp playing its feeble light on her pale face: and this was Rose. She glanced continually down towards the High Street, which seemed the more dismal because of its gaudier shop-lights. She did not move a step from her first stand; but as she pulled her gloves off and on with fierce twitching fingers, it was only too evident that her whole nature was strung up to its last point of endurance. Indeed, a glance at her face might have shown this. Tears stood like beads in her eyes, and now and again they would well over and course her cheeks. She paid no heed to this, save to press her lips so firmly that the blood left them, thus, by sheer effort of will, to regain control of herself. Rose was her name; but the roses had fled her cheek. Deathly pale she was, yet even her pallor did not rob her of her beauty. Rather, it made it seem the more unearthly.

She had not seen Richard for over a fortnight now. He had had to leave for London, so he said. But yesterday she had received a letter from him asking her to meet him to-day at their old rendezvous. The last two or three times she had seen him he had pressed her hotly for a resumption of his rights—for so he evidently deemed them, though he spoke of them as the honoured privileges of their love. Her eyes had become opened, not only to him, but to much else of consequence in this world, as he had done so; but she

had said no more than merely firmly to resist him. She had been driven into the recesses of deep thought, and her whole soul had known dire tempest; but she had had none to counsel, aid, or comfort her. She had stood ready to give up all for one; and now the fierce winds of tempest came from that one. He spoke in his letter of having a most important matter to discuss with her.

She, too, had a most important matter to tell him of. And hence her tears and plucking fingers.

She waited long, but she never so much as moved her position. With rigid tension she awaited him, and for the first time in their acquaintance he was late.

At length he appeared stepping up the street quickly. As he came, she drew a deep, deep breath to control herself. He came up to her saying—

“Did you think I was never coming! I’m sorry to be so late.”

Her hat hid her face from him, and he did not see her agitation.

“Oh, Richard!” she broke out, sobs shaking her over.

“My dear Rose, whatever is the matter?” he exclaimed. She let him take her into his arms, as it seemed to him as though it were against her will.

He comforted her, and soothed her. Presently he said—

“And did you miss me so much as all this? We must never be separated again. You must come to me.”

At this she broke from him convulsively.

“Richard,” she said, struggling fearfully to speak calmly. “I’ve got a——” She ceased; then, gripping his forearm with hard, fierce fingers, she changed her phraseology. “Richard, I have a child coming, you and I.”

"No, Rose, it can't be!" He spoke with horror in his voice. He, the one responsible for it, he spoke with horror!

Her answer was almost of anger—

"But it *is* so! I say it *is* so!"

"Whatever will you do?" He repudiated responsibility.

She said nothing; but her eyes dried of their tears as she stared hardly at him. He shifted his gaze before her.

"Rose," he said, and spoke rapidly, as though to cover thin ice with speed, "this must be my charge. You must come to me. We'll take rooms in London, and live there. You see, as you say, it's our child, and we must both see to it. How soon could you get away, do you think? The sooner the better, I think!"

Hope and despair fluctuated in her. Joy chased revulsion a fearful race round the gloom of her soul. Half she interpreted his meaning, and half she did not. Or rather, his meaning leapt on her, but she resolutely refused it. Yet she put her question to him firmly.

"What do you mean, Richard? That you'll marry me?"

"Oh, Rose, how can I?" He spoke with raised voice. "You know my difficulties. I should be disinherited, for one thing. And I can't earn a living; I've never learnt how, and I have no experience. You see, it would be ruin for both of us. But if you come with me, I'll be faithful to you. I swear that by high Heaven. You'll be as good as a wife to me; better! for I shall know you gave up all for me. Later on, when my uncle dies, we may marry. Look, dear, it would really be more comfortable the way I suggest.

For you're everything to me, God knows that; and it would cut me to the quick to see you in want or anxiety, as you would be if I had suddenly to earn my own living. Whereas this way, you see, I'll have plenty of money, and so, dear, will you."

She drew away quickly from him at this.

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way," he pleaded quickly, "I really didn't. I didn't mean to suggest I should buy you. Oh, that's dreadful. No, it's only love that could possibly justify the step I suggest. And God knows I love you."

"You don't love me, Richard." It flashed from her as though it were a revelation to herself, that broke out despite herself. She had kept silence hitherto, and her sense of superiority over him had brought her a certain strength and calm.

The words stabbed through him.

"Rose," he said, speaking slowly and with horror; "you say I don't love you."

"No, you don't." She spoke firmly: all that she had discovered in her deep recesses speaking itself clearly. Womanhood warmed through her, with all the pain of growth and understanding. Womanhood had come with motherhood. "You know you don't. I didn't know it till now. Love asks the chief care. If you loved me you wouldn't put everything on me. If you loved me you would give up everything for me. You know that. You wouldn't give me all the danger, and keep the safe side—you couldn't do it. If you loved me, I would come to you gladly; but then if you loved me, you wouldn't ask me this. Richard, if you're playing with yourself, don't play with me; don't try and delude me too."

Something of light flashed on him as she spoke. But he denied it, he would not have it; fearfully he

refused it, and returned in self-defence to his protestations.

"Rose, I do love you. Believe that! I swear by all I hold holy that I love you. As I look on you now, there's nothing I want so much as you. Even in your trouble you're beautiful. It would break my heart to leave you. I could never, never forget you. Rose, will you come with me?"

"I wish I could think that were true—now!" she said.

"But it is, it is!" He protested with hands outstretched.

Swiftly she flashed on him—

"Then why don't you give up anything for me?" He shrank at her glance; and alone again, with none to contend with as equal, she relapsed, murmuring brokenly, "Not that I want it now. I don't think I do. But if you had loved me——"

"I say I do. I say I do. Don't I offer you *nearly* everything? I should live with you, and be faithful to you."

"Richard, you don't love me; otherwise I'd come. Oh, I know I'm done for, anyway. I know that; I know that. But I couldn't go to you. I should despise myself if I did."

She wailed in her grief. He made as though to comfort her, but she sprang from him, crying—

"Don't touch me! Don't touch me!" She spoke as though his touch would soil her—instinct bade her know that it would do so. Her anger was born of revulsion, and it scorched him. "Go! Why don't you go?"

"Are we to part like this, Rose?" He spoke sheepishly.

"Yes. Go. Go." She leant against the lamp-

post, and covered her face with her hands. A great torrent of sobs rose ready to break away. But she held them back, and quivered with their force.

He feared for her, but was afraid to touch her. He could see her trembling as though a mighty ague had seized on her limbs. He clenched and unclenched his hands. Then slowly he turned away; and with slow steps made down the road. At every step he left nobility, honour, possibilities of greatness, behind him. At every step his soul shrank, and his blood paled from richness, his thought from possibilities of purity and loveliness. Yet he held to his resolution to do no more than he had offered, and he began almost to deem himself a martyr. So he passed. Here he left nobility, and if ever he would be noble again he would have to return here, back over the ways, to take up the possibilities given him. Whoever saw him thereafter saw the mark of this hour on him in poverty of soul, in deadliness of effort and ambition.

So he passed down the street, and, reaching home, slept for very weariness. The next morning he thanked Providence he had not played foolishly, for sunlight made the past night's scene seem sickly.

## XXV

Two nights after this, Mrs. Foggetty sat before her kitchen fire stitching. Her thoughts had been of Rose; but they had passed off into the somnambulism of continued monotonous effort. A lamp stood on the table beside her, burning with steady light. Her head was lowered over her work; and a recurrent shadow leapt over the stone floor of the kitchen as her hand darted to and fro from the snowy substance she held firmly

in her lap. Along the raftered roof, like a cluster of large bats, hung a number of hams, sweet-cured by herself. On the mantelpiece over her head an ancient time-piece gave out its monotonous seconds, which, with the faint roar of the fire up the flues, was the only sound that broke the uncanny stillness, for the swift shuttle of her hand was as noiseless as the swing of the planets in the far ether of space.

Her thoughts had been of Rose. Not anxious thoughts: peaceful, rather! For her anxiety had passed. It was obvious to her that Rose was different, but the main matter to her was that Rose was now more continually at home, and that therefore every movement of hers was within motherly attention. Poor Mary! With what indignation she would have greeted the thought that her attitude was all one with the most essential selfishness! What vials of anger, bitter, somewhat shrewish anger, would have been outpoured on any having the temerity to suggest that her care was in no way for her daughter's welfare, but for her own peace of mind! Nevertheless, so it was. Rose; she who was to live, to do, to accomplish, to achieve; a vital being with her own governing laws of life, with an individual soul and destiny: such a person could hardly have been said to have even concerned Mary hitherto. But her own daughter—bearing the name Rose, happening also, by evil and rebellious chance, to have different desires and emotions, but her daughter nevertheless: such a person concerned Mary much.

Thus the subdued and troubled Rose of the past few weeks touched her pity but brought her peace. Her shrewd thought divined that some trouble had occurred. Rose's manner evinced it. But whatever had happened, she now knew what was happening. Rose was within her control again. She had endeav-

oured to probe the trouble; but Rose's taciturnity was not to be gainsaid. Her defeat had not disturbed Mary much, since it was rocked in the arms of a renewed peace. Even on her week-day evenings Rose had returned home, which she had not done since her first week away. So Mary deemed she had cause for contentment. At other times Rose's bodeful face, on which trouble lowered like a thundercloud wracking the fair hue of evening, would have harrowed her; now it was but a little bitter in the much sweet. The cloud would pass, and evening be fair again; so, docile again, she schooled her heart to patience.

A rare thing is selflessness, because hard to give! Hard for any, but harder for Mary Foggetty. The troubles of this earth move in circles; and judgments are easier to suspend when it is seen that each sinner's sin has arisen through his or her being sinned against. Who dare judge when this is seen? Surely only the brutal, the cynical. Mary was a selfish and petulant mother. But she once had yearned that she herself should be something, somewhere; at first, healthily yearned it; but Andrew had ever forbidden it. Therefore Rose suffered.

Now Mary sat stitching, and in the somnambulism of the thoughts the tides of peace washed to and fro over the shores of her mind. To the inevitable monotony of the time-piece her thin hands passed swiftly to and fro over her work, and she did not notice a pale dishevelled face that looked through the further window. The night without was dark; and the face looked long, and then disappeared.

Still Mary worked; and then it came on her like a far memory that she had heard the latchet of the outer door opened. Looking round semi-consciously, she saw Rose standing in the open doorway, silhouetted



against the outer night. She dropped her work.

"Rose!" she cried.

Rose's face was discoloured with tears, another torrent of which stood brimming in her eyes.

Her work fell from her lap on to the floor as she went quickly towards Rose, who stood statuesque in the doorway, full of trouble.

"Whatever is the matter?" The mother's voice rose in alarmed query.

Down came the tears, coursing over Rose's face, from their caverns of sorrow.

"Mother! Oh, mother!" Rose's hand held the door-latchet in fierce grip, but the tears had their way. She struggled to control herself; it had been against her intention to be overwhelmed in this way: but the dire repression of these past days was swept aside in the dark torrent of her trouble. She covered her face with her hands: sorrow would have her know that her holiest was secret.

"My child, my child, whatever is the matter?"

Mary put her arms about her daughter, and Rose buried her face in her mother's bosom. Her sobs were painful to hear; they shook her frame like a tempest. Sob on sob broke from her. It was terrible. It struck fear into Mary's heart. Like a silvern birch Rose was shaken to the roots of her being in the dark night of grief.

For a long, long while it failed to bring itself relief, till Mary's alarm grew to dimensions of terror. She breathed helpless, feeble words of comfort, interlaced with perplexed query. But at length the tempest died low, and Mary led her daughter to a chair, fussing meanwhile over her busily. This was salutary more than Mary thought it would be, and for reasons she little recked of.

"But tell me, Rose, my child, whatever is the matter. It perplexes your mother's heart to see you grieved so. What is it, dear? Tell your old mother!" Mary drew Rose's head to her shoulder, as she sat on the arm of Rose's chair beside her.

"Mother, I shouldn't have come here." Rose spoke with quivering words, through which her grief shuddered like earth's abysmal steams finding vent. Her self was in ruins, waiting to be builded anew: the fabrics ever the same, but their fashion and structure in the lap of the Future, with the bitter memory of the Past.

"Rose! Wherever else should you come when you're in trouble?"

"Oh, but, mother, you don't know." The tears started again, quietly this time.

"Whatever it is this is the place for you." Mary sought to guide her to the theme. "But I'm waiting to hear."

"Mother—oh, I can't tell you."

"But, dear, you must. I insist on it." Mary quietly and firmly divested Rose of hat and coat, speaking the while.

"Oh, how can I? how can I? You're so different to all this."

"I have had my troubles, Rose, and they may help to understand yours." Mary dimly thought Rose had perhaps been wounded in love, in confirmation of her earlier instinct. "But tell me first, how is it you're not at work this evening?"

"I ran away."

"You ran away?"

"Yes."

"But, what—— Weren't they kind to you?"

"Oh, I couldn't stand it. Mother——"

"Yes, dear?"

"I'm in trouble."

"Yes, dear?"

"I went to see a doctor a week ago—on Monday—I couldn't understand it."

Dim forebodings struck on Mary, and chilled her heart.

"Yes, dear: go on!"

"He told me——" Rose's head sank.

"Tell me, Rose."

"I have a child coming."

"Rose!" Mary's voice rang sharp, and sounded cleavage.

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!"

Silence furred the two as they sat side by side facing this thing. A simple fact of Nature, and it spoke all this calamity. Strange world! Mary was the first to speak.

"Who was it, Rose?"

Rose lifted her head, and gazed at the fire.

"Mother, I thought everything of him. He was on a pedestal to me."

There spoke the centre woe: the ruin of her heart!

"But, Rose, who was he?"

"Mother, don't ask me! No one you know."

"Dear, haven't I a right to know?"

Rose lifted her head firmly, and clenched her hands as she spoke—

"No, mother, you haven't."

"Surely your mother has a right."

"No, mother, she hasn't."

The third personal pronoun spoke of a world owning its own laws, remote from jurisdiction of Wildbrook Farm. Wisdom came on Mary, and she relinquished her query.

Nevertheless, the note of cleavage was in the air. It struck with a chill air on Rose. But where else was she to go? To escape from her own reeling thought had she come here. She had fled from herself, and the cleavage was driving her in upon herself. It struck Mary too, and she blamed her daughter for lack of confidence. Yet this was no occasion for blame; and she threw it off to immerse herself anew in this common calamity fallen on them.

Thus slowly she drew the whole tale from Rose, though to tread the road again in thought was to Rose like the scraping of an open wound. At length it was all told, all save the innermost details that were to Rose as impossible to tell as it would be to breathe away life itself. But to herself, in her own thought, they passed in review, and new lights shone from the incidents that were a shameless exposing of the one-time lover. Each incident, each detail, was pregnant with new cruel meaning. The bare recital made him seem more and more a malignant plotter, but her instinct spoke out loudly that he was not. The memory of his kisses warm on her lips she cherished dearly as token of some love in him; but occasion interpreted them bitterly as lustful exultation. Thought reeled at the twin exposition.

The recital aged her. If it dried her tears, it seared the kindness in her. Her strength found refuge in bitterness and anger; but the tears hovered near to refresh her parched young soul. After long silence, Mary spoke—

“Well, dear, you’re our child still.” She had so long left reality that she found it necessary to say this. Had it been deeply true it had not been found necessary to say. “But it’s terrible. I don’t know what your father will say.”

"Oh, father mustn't know. Don't tell father. I'll go." Rose spoke in sudden alarm, and arose from her chair to take her hat.

Mary was before her though, and forced her back.

"Rose, don't be silly! Where can you go? Are you going back to the Sims'?"

"Never! I can't. It was their doctor I went to. Besides——"

The space spoke unutterable volumes.

"That decides it then. I don't know how we'll manage, but you must stay here. It'll mean, of course, our leaving Oldhamlet. Dear, dear me! how troubles come one after another! Still, Rose, you go up to your room. Sleep if you can. I'll speak with your father. No, don't make it worse by talking. Isn't it bad enough as it is? Go, child! Your father may be here any minute. Leave it to me!"

So Rose went; and though she lay down, the fury of her anguish found refuge in neither tears nor the weariness of sleep.

Mary sat in the chair Rose had vacated, moaning her trouble over before the fire. It took no coherence; it was but a devastating turbulence of perplexity and pain.

When Andrew came in it was apparent even to his ratiocinative thought that something was amiss.

"What's the matter, Mary?" he asked.

"Rose is here," said Mary, numbly.

"Oh! Not ill, I hope." Vexation rang in his voice.

"She is, and she isn't." Mary groped for words to speak.

"Mary, I wish you wouldn't vex me with riddles. You know how ill I can afford an illness, just at this present moment."

It was an untimely beginning, but it caused Mary to rise to a sudden strength that years (and a husband in the years, that found escape from tenderness towards her by a rapture that pretended to be other-worldly, but was most mundane, being bound by the world of Andrew Foggetty) had whipped out of her.

"Andrew, it doesn't matter a bit whether you're vexed or not. We've got a big trouble to face, and it concerns Rose."

Andrew stared aghast. If some one were to speak his thoughts, they would be that he had considered this pugilistic Mary vanquished finally years ago. He would deny the thought; yet it was so. He braced himself to conflict.

"Mary, you know I don't like scenes. They upset my soul, and this frail life of ours isn't worth it. When you've got over this display of temper, then we can talk." He went over and took his weekly paper of expositions, and ensconced himself in his favourite chair.

"Andrew!" Mary's voice broke the silence. Tears were in her eyes, unknown visitors these many days. She was broken again, and it boded ill for Rose. "You don't know what trouble has come on us."

"Where is Rose?"

"In her room."

"Is she ill?"

Silence held a tension of steel between them awhile.

"Some man has betrayed her!" Mary's voice was fearful.

"What!" Andrew's paper fluttered to the ground.

"That is so."

"Rose has sinned?"

"I didn't say so." Mary's voice stumbled as she spoke. "I said she had been betrayed."

"Mary, don't let us have any jesuitical casuistry, it has the mark of the beast on it. It is anathema maranatha; that is to say, anathema—maranatha was an Arabic watchword to the Corinthians telling them of the Lord's coming."

"Andrew, she's our child."

"I disown her. She is none of mine. Here I come from a peaceful meeting of prayer, and on my return I find sin has entered my household. Do you know what this would mean to me? I would lose the pre-eminence the godly brethren have been led to give me. It shall never be said I held traffic with sin. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. And I do it even with my own daughter. Yes, I disown her."

"And what is Rose to do?" Grief rose on a crescendo in Mary's question.

"I don't know. That is her matter with the God against whom she has sinned."

"We can't leave it like that."

"Not only can we; we must. What right have we to interfere with the ways of Divine wisdom? God alone is judge, and we must leave these things to Him. Besides, think what it would mean to us! It would ruin us."

"Is it the ruin you are thinking of, or the sin, Andrew?" Rebellion raised its head again in Mary's question.

Instinct led Andrew to meet it by not denying the double nature of his objection.

"Both," said he. "The sin first, then the ruin. We are bound in faithfulness to God to punish sin, to distinguish between sheep and goats—though that is the judgment of the living nations, not the Great White Throne. We must cut loose sin and all its ways. Nor

must we jeopardize such position as God may have given us to use for His advantage."

"Do you mean we must send Rose away, alone, Andrew?"

The horror in her voice caused him to wince; but he faced the issue, knowing well that years had robbed her of the spirit to thwart him.

"Yes, that is just what I do mean. She must not even spend this night in the house. Daylight might discover it all, and undo us."

"Andrew!"

"It's no use rebelling against the Lord's will, Mary. His mind in a matter of this kind is very clear. For my part, I must even refuse to see her again. You have already seen her, and so you do not contaminate yourself further—not much, that is—by seeing her again." He took a sovereign from his purse. "Give her this for her railway fare. I don't even know— But yes, give it to her, even if I implicate myself. I'll be back in an hour's time. By that time the house must be clear."

"Andrew!" She called after him. But he was gone.

In a minute he reappeared, saying—

"Now, Mary, understand me! There must be no flinching in this. We must do God's will, whatever it costs us. I don't wish to be harsh, but if I find her here on my return, her expulsion will be worse than if you had the doing of it." Which said, he was gone again.

Mary moaned her grief awhile, then went upstairs and broke it gently to Rose. Rose sprang up from the bed.

"Mother, I'm glad," she said. "Oh, I couldn't bear to see him again. It would kill me." "Him" indicated her father.



"But, Rose, whatever will you do?"

The prospect of the future stared blankly at Rose. Fortunately grief numbs the thought, otherwise thought had crippled endeavour in her.

"I don't know, mother; I don't know. But I must go."

"He gave me this to give you." Mary held out the sovereign.

"Tell him I don't want it."

"But what will you do?"

"Mother, I don't know. I've got to go, you see, for all that."

Together they went down into the kitchen. And as Mary found her daughter a meal, which Rose made a show at eating to soothe her mother, a sudden thought fell on Mary. Leaving Rose to her meal she rushed upstairs; and, returning, thrust a withered old purse into Rose's coat pocket.

"Be very careful of that, dear!" she murmured, "there's money in it. I have put it away in case Andrew should ever need it."

"Mother, I can't take it; I can't."

"Rose, my child, for your mother's sake. And see, dear! let me know, be sure to let me know, how you are managing. For my sake, child! My heart, you know, will be bleeding for you. And forgive me if ever I have been unkind or irritable with you. That man has opened my eyes. I hope I have never been like that to you, Rosie; I fear I have."

"Mother, don't."

Mother and daughter mingled tears. Afterwards Rose knew that they had never been so near or kin. Over their preparations for departure, they breathed the same breath, and moved in the same thought.

And after Rose was gone Mary took her old chair

and burst into a torrent of bitter tears. Thereafter she never went, with or without Andrew, to his Meeting House; and Andrew, curiously, never had the heart to do more than timidly ask her. And even this was shrivelled in time by her cutting negative.

## XXVI

THE night was kind to Rose. The harsh synchronization of inner sorrow to outer gloom, forebore its fury for her. The air remembered that Autumn was erecting its gorgeous porch for a stern and snowy queen to enter through upon the earth. In truth, the first remembrancers of the far cavalcade of the pinching imps of frost were already riding the lazy wind that flew. The night was dark. Stars in innumerable hosting had doubtless swum out over the sombre ocean of night; but weeping mists, upcalled from pond and stream, floated to obscure the stellar congregations. Through the dim gloom each dell and declivity could be seen nursing its pool of vapour, like a monstrous cup brimmed over with sacred distillation. At steadfast intervals along the road tall trees sprang swiftly up from modest hedgerows, and disappeared into misty night. The mists were in revelry. Mystic shadowy daughters of gloom, they danced upon the soft wind. Fleeing, they chased each other: chasing, they fled. Through the trees they passed spiritously, and sighed a wailful soft laughter as they did so. And when they had passed and gone, the trees wept unquenchable tears upon the new-fallen leaves below. An aloof farmhouse loomed gigantic through the gloom; and, surprised at so sharp a discovery, fled swiftly

through its enveloping mist. Sad it was; yet, therewithal, tender and not unkindly.

So through the night Rose passed, careless, heedless whither she went. A bundle of clothes that motherly care had thrust on her attentions was clasped firmly in her left, while her right hand reposed in the pocket of her coat clutching a worn purse that a last injunction had bade her take care of. Thus blindly, unwittingly, she guarded her property. Chaos had fallen on her thought.

Maybe the mists that fled each other before her unregarding vision were in part responsible for it, but through her troubled mind there passed shadows and unintelligible glooms. She had left Wildbrook Farm in tearful sorrow, avoiding Oldhamlet, and striking instinctively away from the distant Ipstowe. But her will had given over its functions to her automaton of hopeless action: grief, perplexity and fierce strain had dazed her. Her brisk step had settled to an irresponsible and wearied plod.

Midnight still saw her striking on and on. But before night had narrowed to morning she had sunk by the roadside through sheer fatigue. To say she slept would be to err: as much to err as to say that she was awake as she walked. She changed one manner of fitful sleep for another: and both racked her overburdened mind.

In truth, her being was in ruins. The mind was sound, but there was none to direct. A new being would arise; but the old being was of the shades of yesterday. Her young ardent hope in her lover had soared the cœrulean, to be winged cruelly. Resolutely, it had fluttered aloft again, though burdened with a heavier weight of anxiety than she had ever known to bear yet. Heavily it had sustained its burden, seek-

ing to win itself back to the upper heights of day: but the archer Despair had known no mercy; another bitter shaft had felled her to earth again, with her new burden. Dazed, sorely wounded, she had lain awhile; then, scarce knowing what she did, she had eschewed flight, painfully seeking a one-time nest. Summarily evicted thence, she knew not now why she lived.

She scarcely lived. It might truly be said, she did not live, for there was no "she" to live. Her body took over direction of its functions till such time as an elder "she" should raise its maturer, perchance harsher, head from the earth: elder in growth of wisdom, elder in bitterness of wisdom, elder in disillusionment, elder in sorrow, maybe elder in strength and resolution. To deny that this should be is to deny life: and to deny life is the axe at the root of sanity. It is needful ruins come; and though the Woe be heaped on them by whom such ruins come, it follows not that any woe fall for perpetual disaster on the ruined. It is the touch of a primary faith to believe that they who ruin are in worse case than those who are ruined. Wisdom may come hardly to the latter, but her lip will curl in scorn at the former. A strange goddess is Wisdom! Her feet tread through disasters while her brow is arched with the heavens. She comes with beauty, and her garments are lovely; but she comes up the ways of Sorrow. Far-seeing, she is ruthless: she forswears easier roads of travel. Steadily she regards Life, and sees it purposeful. She divides her children from the children of Folly: they who live, wakeful and keen, from them who sleep in sloth, ease, munificence or monotony. She knows the first as her children because they believe in Life: she spurns ironically the others because they cling fearfully to existence. She knows well that Folly's hands are full of sleek and bounteous

things, because her destiny is Futility: but in her own hands is a rod because her destiny is exceeding beautiful.

But little recked Rose of this as morning stepped with golden brow and ruddy hair over a gentle row of dewy downs, throwing a silver beam on her tear-stained face! Slowly she woke, and gazed heavily about her. Dully she turned to thought; and remembrance with a sharp pang rushed on her.

She knew not where she was; in fact, this mattered little, for she did not know what to do. Painfully, for her body was sore, she raised herself. An inner instinct took her on in continuation of the way she had come the previous night, for she remembered the weary walk but vaguely. She walked quickly, for she was deathly cold. And as heat came back over her limbs, with it came back some vigour of determination. Presently she sat down on a milestone, that told her she was taking her way in towards the midlands, and took some vague reckoning of her position.

What to do next, that was the insistent voice that beat through her brain, calling her to a resolution she was not yet in possession of. What to do, where to go, how to act—insurgently they flowed on her with the renewed motion of her blood. But she could not resolve. Resolution defied her, though she chased it feebly. Morning was waxing on the earth, as the sun climbed his fields of blue. It incited her to joy; but her deadness of emotion mocked at felicity. It called to Life to exult, and to its call the birds gave back a piping chorus, vaguely lamenting their earlier choruses of strength. But it did not touch Rose. It seemed to her unreasoning instinct that for months yet (at least) she could do nothing. She had sought a harbourage,

but the storm had leapt the bar and driven her forth for its relentless sport.

The rumble of a cart struck on her ears, and, as though frightened, she brushed her hair back, and collected herself, so as to present at least some air of self-possession. Confusedly she gazed at the two-wheeled cart that rolled to a stop opposite her.

"Well!" an astonished voice interjected above her line of vision.

Looking up she saw a face vaguely and distantly familiar regarding her with round astonishment. She knew that to fence inquisitiveness she should ask some question; but she had no question to ask. She knew not where the road led, she had no destination, she had neither plans nor intentions. She gazed up at him: tear-stained, perplexed, dishevelled elegance, with strange beauty as of a hunted deer.

"Well, I never! Lost yourself?"

She clutched at his question.

"Yes, I think I have."

"Where are you going to?"

The name on the milestone swam before her memory to rescue her perplexity. She uttered it.

"Ryford? Lord love the lass, but you're a terrible journey from there. Small wonder you missed your way." Kindliness glowing in his voice touched his laughter with a soft hand.

"Yes, I know. I was looking for a railway station."

"Oh! But you're a bit out of the track of railways here. You're sort of in between the lines. Your shortest way'd be to go along this way to Oldhamlet. But it's a goodish step out; and I can see you've been doing a bit of walking. I'm going there, if you'd like a lift."

"Oh, no, I don't want to go back there!"

"Go back there!"

It was a misstep, but she had not the mental agility to rectify it. She let it pass, and said doggedly—

"I want to go on this way."

"But it's ten mile that way."

"Thank you! Is it straight on?"

"Pretty near! But look here, what's a lass like you doing alone like this, so tired-like, and so far from anywhere? Where do you come from?"

She made him no reply.

"Do you come from Oldhamlet?" he asked again, attempting to assume a firm kindliness.

"Then I'm to go straight on this road?" A certain dignity rang in her voice, and flowed in her manner, speaking hopefully for a future resurrection in her.

"Well, yes. No harm meant."

"Thank you!" she said, rising.

"If you like to come back a short way, you can have some breakfast at my farm. And a tidy-up, like."

"No, thank you," she said, passing on. "I think I have some here." She lifted her bundle. "Good-morning!"

"Well, that beats all! Good-morning!" He added the salutation hastily as she passed out of earshot.

His cart rumbled on, as the wave passed along the reins reached his steed, but he still gazed after her retreating figure.

"Where have I seen that girl before?" He paused perplexedly. Then, long after, he broke out, "Not Foggetty's daughter, surely! Can't be," he added, in dismissal of an impossible idea. "But I must say it was wonderful like her!"

## XXVII

ALL that day Rose wandered unhappily, avoiding houses single or clustered with an instinctive horror. She shunned human beings. The great rolling heavens above her gave her some joy; they breathed their wide felicity. The surging white masses of cloud, driven up over the blue on a rising south-west wind, furled a high magnificence over her head, and awed her to some peace. But the sight of a human being dispelled it all. Her faith in her kind had been shattered; and a wise instinct bade her spirit absent itself from its associates in life, that thus, in seclusion, it might mend the rends in its fabric. Such rends might only be made good by webs spun from within, and wrought subtly into the general texture; and this was a work in no way to be hurried.

Among the clothes her mother had put together she had found some food, and of this she had partaken. Acquaintance with the interior of the motley purse had wrung her to tears anew. It had contained nearly ten pounds in note and coin, stealthy savings for many a day.

That night she drew nearer to humanity, seeking shelter in an ancient barn, using straw and some sacks for warmth. But cruel dreams visited her now. Her lover taunted her with his sometime kindness, haunted her with the figure of her hopes. Sleep, instead of cradling her in forgetfulness, led her through that past which it was her business to bury. Once or twice she woke feeling a lover's arms about her, but the wind sighing through the crevices and cracks of the barn reminded her that she had dreamt of a joy that had turned to deepest bitterness, like luscious fruit becom-



ing ashes beneath the tongue. She slept again; but only to wander through some fresh felicity of the past.

At morn she wandered out, keeping ware of human beings with an observation that was almost crafty. The face of Nature soothed her; but Nature was a shrewd nurse withal, for her thermometers had known an early declension towards the regions of frost. Seeking, and finding, a stream for her ablutions, Rose won herself to something of presentibility, and devoured the last of her viands. Then she gave the day to wandering, tortured by glimpsed remembrance of her night's dreams.

## XXVIII

IN truth, a deadly combat waxed in Rose. Memory would ruin her, devastate her; Nature would soothe, refashion her. At times, it must be said, her mind well-nigh reeled at the impact of the contending hosts. Another nature would not have passed to such devastation, it is true; but another nature had not known her strength of sorrow. Her strength was her aid, and her undoing. She had put out her whole strength to wrestle with Life; but Life evaded her, and she wrestled with herself. The song sung lately in her ears was no mere love lullaby, but a noble chant having Life for theme. And as Night brought back its sounding periods, and Day its dire cacophony, she clutched her hands and called aloud for very pain.

She had aroused curiosity of a transient kind as she passed the larger thoroughfares of the country. But inasmuch as she went on, striking ever forward, no rumours gathered round her, to reduplicate themselves and grow fantastic by curious addition.

Fellow-passengers along the roads made themselves known to her quick instinct long ere she sighted them; with these she held herself in hardy constraint, passing by with bowed head. But when she had long stretches of the road to herself—more particularly in the lanes that preference chose her—she would moan aloud in her anguish, hot tears coursing her cheeks, tears not of grief or pain, but of infinite soul-torture. This much was she unhinged, for the devastation of her soul had passed beyond its causes, and enveloped her whole being. The storm, once roused, rose on its own impetus to a tempest that crashed relentlessly through her mind, leaving a sad trail of wreckage.

Hunger drove her to towns but rarely, for she would purchase herself what of food she needed, sufficient to last her for some couple of days, and then she would make out for the bosom of earth. Barns failed too often; and she would turn to the nearest inn, lodging there for the night. Her beauty hung out as a tempting bait for molestation; but something of wildness in her spoke the fear that forbids. Don Juan hath ever a subtle instinct, on which it is his wont to rely. Seldom he errs; and when he does, experience is stored up for instinct to thrive by. The true Don Juan never courts inevitable spurning; it quenches the unctuous self-pride on which he grows fair and buxom: and such marks of inevitable spurning were printed in large characters over Rose. Subtle, indefinable marks, yet not to be mistaken.

Once only did any venture, though many had hungered. And this man was haunted by her long days after. She had just come into a town intending to lodge there that night. It was her wont in this strange wild wandering to turn to her slumber with the birds, and be awake and afoot soon after dawn. As she

searched for a simple hostelry, an elegant gallant floated over to her.

"Excuse me!" said he.

She drew up, startled, trembling.

"I think we have met before," graciously began he, noting her trembling, and complimenting his instinct for weakness in her.

She regarded him, and a wild look grew in her eyes, that caused him to feel something less assured of his instinct. With a motion of anger and scorn (new display of emotions these, in Rose, called up from possibilities to fire of self these days) she turned from him and made as though to pass him.

He slipped beside her.

"Don't you know me?" he asked.

"No!" Steel shot from her eyes to accompany the monosyllable.

"Then don't you think this an admirable time to——" he began.

She turned on him, with hand slightly raised. It was her thought to strike him. But her hand fell to her side, and her thought paled from anger to sorrow. He had feared her stroke, for her intention was obvious; and he wondered at the two tears that beaded her cheeks beneath her swelling eyes. With a gesture of infinite dignity she turned him by.

"Good Heavens! What a rum girl! But something's the matter with her. Looks wild!" Muttering which he passed on his way.

And indeed she had looked wild; like a sunset succeeding to storm and tempest. Her sorrow had perplexed him, and her anger had corroded his gaiety. It was with sorrow and anger she, too, found an inn, and turned to her bed. A familiar incident in the ways of towns and cities; common enough, yet it sent

him on his way abashed and disturbed, while it flung her into a fit of torture. It was a fresh signal waved before her eyes that the great things of life were the sport of men. Anger bit her; strong uncontrollable anger that tossed her to and fro in her bed, and working its way into an eventual sleep, branded her with the mark of fierce hate.

She had avoided Mankind merely, hitherto; but when she awoke early the following morning she fled it. The seeds of a new distemper were sown in her mind.

## XXIX

SHE was helpless, homeless; let that be noted for a fit understanding of her. Had she been near the warm, if vagarious, heart of humanity, its richness would have soothed her particular grief. It is the inevitable instinct of sorrow to lose itself in the mass of a multitude; to feel it washing about it like a cleansing sea. But her faith in humanity had been devastated; for all she had known of humanity had deserted her. She was alone; and every renewed impetus of her sorrow drove her to greater loneliness. She erected her loneliness about her as a defending void. It became so acute that it often took the very pangs of hunger to drive her to the clusters where humanity defended itself from the isolations without.

Her mind grew acute and sensitive. She grew to fear the night of sleep. She only found relief in rapid movement. Motherhood demonstrated itself in her. What it meant of discomfort was a fragment in the larger bulk of soul-torture it brought her. Fierce irritabilities seized her. Often she wailed aloud in the

utter loneliness of anxiety. She had threaded her way through Bedfordshire with its comfortable pastures, and was now in Buckinghamshire, on the hills above the valley of ancient Thames. There she would sit, gazing over the vistas as though they were her own questionable future. And as she knew this young life within her, interposing between her and the ways of society, bitterness sank into deep despair. Her tears flowed freely. What could she do? she asked of the heedless winds and sere bushes. If she returned to seek some employment it would be to face a suspicion that would soon enough be born. Her state would not long remain undiscovered. Incapacity would succeed, she said, knowing not that it was rather her own sensitive mind that interposed than any corporal barrier. The world, her world, had turned her off. She read its judgment in hideous letters; and fled it. She knew it wrong, her whole pure, strong nature rose up to acclaim it wrong; and in anger she spurned it. It had been faithless to her; and she did not trust it. The one emotion she had found in Life that had made it a thing divine: eternal, beautiful, sublime, a thing from the very hand of God—had wrought on her this barrier, had ostracized her. It became a poison.

But a new terror beset her. Hitherto her mind had sufficed to harry her, emptying out its own internal furies. But external furies now camped about her, and mocked at her with evil faces. Perplexities, anxieties, beset her. For November was about her now; and none choose to wander in that desolate month of fury. Reluctantly she found herself turning to the towns more frequently. Her mind hated it; and her judgment hated it, for it made fearful inroads on her scanty purse.

Moreover, she was ill. The intensity of her mind

forbade her knowing this at first. But she discovered it. In that interval between waking and the returning of energy it was made known to her. It was not possible that rains and mists should rage about her unprotectedness without their working their evil on her body, worn and spent as it was with the ferocious working of her mind.

Without deciding to do so, she gave up her wandering and took to hovering. She clung to a certain town in Berkshire, fearing to move far from it. Of a day, if the weather permitted her, and often if the weather withheld permission, she took to wandering about the adjacent hillsides. At night she would return, and make forthwith to the sheets of her bed.

But she began to achieve notoriety so. Curiosity will not leave misery to finish itself, or at least take its own way. It must needs pragmatize on sorrow. At first, she did not notice it. But inquisitive urchins wondered at her. Her landlady eyed her askance. Labouring men commented on her. The thing grew about her, and forced itself on her consciousness. She fled.

### XXX

SHE found another town to serve her end, for wander she could not. Illness grew on her. It crept past her body to her mind, the initial seat of her wretchedness.

Funds had come perilously low. Boots and clothes had been required of her. Let no too curious eye follow her as she wrestled with her diminishing exchequer. Suffice it to say that the Berkshire lanes and downs knew other tears than November's merciless rains; more scalding withal.

But help was at hand. Though she began to brood over sudden means to end this growing and accumulating anxiety, yet help was at hand. Day after day she had haunted a certain pool that tempted her. She had treasured the knowledge of it, and daily went there to familiarize herself with it, determining not to yield to its chilly tempting till all was indeed over, and complete for an end. She clung to life. Moreover, her very illness and weariness induced indecision in her.

Twice on returning from the green pool that served for her daily companion she had staggered in the streets of Brokenfield, and almost fallen. On the latter occasion some one had come to her aid. She dimly saw a kindly, somewhat rubicund, face that asked particulars of her. She was nearly at the end of strength, but she had sufficient consciousness to fence and evade him. Firmly he renewed his questionings; but, murmuring broken thanks, she left him. Fear was in her eyes as she did so.

She did not note, however, that this stranger followed after her, not only through the streets, but into her very hotel. It was a forsaken hotel she had sought, none too clean withal; but it had served the double utility of cheapness and seclusion.

"Who is this girl just gone upstairs?" he asked of the ungainly proprietor when he discovered him.

"She? Now you're asking. Pretty lass, isn't she?" The worthy proprietor knew his interlocutor for a comfortably retired salesman of some sort from a near city, and therefore was not disposed to waste respect on an equal, the more so since he was little likely to find him any patronage.

"You're right, she is. But what is she doing here?"

"Living. The kind of rum thing most of us do; though why we do it God only knows."

"But don't you know anything more of her?"

"Now, look here, Mr. Bradley, what do I usually know of the people that stay at my hotel? Nothing! And more'n that, I don't want to know. She pays, that's all I know, or want to know."

"But she's ill."

"I know. But that's her business. I expect she's like the rest of us—got to work, ill or no ill."

"Does she work? She doesn't look the working sort."

"I suppose so. She goes out early, and comes back late, anyhow; and that looks like it. I don't know where she works, though."

Mr. Bradley regarded the other a moment, and determined a different line of tactics.

"Have a whisky-and-soda with me?"

The other enthused with a quite remarkable speed.

"Don't mind if I do," said he.

The bitter weather, the floating mists, and the perennial adjunct of weather vagary served their turn. Then Mr. Bradley, having aroused a more congenial mood in the worthy innkeeper, brought back the conversational ship into its earlier current.

"About that girl, I think she seems to need attention, you know. She nearly fell in the Cowley Road when I saw her first. More than that, she looked hunted and wild when I spoke to her. I didn't like it."

"Maybe you're right. What can you do, though? The wife's tried to speak to her, but she won't have it. We don't charge her much, you know. Give her hot cocoa in bed, and that kind of thing. She's bad, I know; and if you ask me, who isn't a curious man, it's more'n illness. Her room's above ours at the back, and sometimes at night we hear her walking to and



fro, to and fro. It's disturbing; but bless you! we don't say anything."

"Does she though? Does she though? Dear, dear me!" Mr. Bradley's shining, kindly face, puckered with commiseration and anxiety.

"You don't know where she goes of a day?"

"No." The negative was crisp.

"What time does she go out? You see, I'm worried about her; her look at me was like a rabbit's, driven crazy. There's enough trouble in the world without any going on we can stop. You know, of course, what time she goes out."

"She used to go out early; five, six, earlier sometimes. Now it's generally eight or nine. She's always back much about the same time."

### XXXI

THAT night Mr. Bradley had a deep conversation with his wife on the subject, and found misunderstanding arising abrupt across his goodwill. That is the perpetual difficulty of the earth. Who has not seen visions, and found their mention meet dull misunderstanding? Derision is thrice-welcome as compared with such misunderstanding. For derision arouses combat; misunderstanding is a sudden blanket over a fire. Derision is the trumpet-note of challenge; misunderstanding is the cold shoulder of neglect.

"But what do you propose to do?" queried his wife.

"Follow her to-morrow, and find out where she works."

"My dear James!"

She had not seen the vision he had. She had not

known a wild, piteous eye and shrinking manner stretch out like a hand to strike chords of pity over the soul's secret strings. She merely heard a customary tale of some misfortune; imagined or real, deserved or undeserved, but quite beyond the pale of her personal interference. Her bland expostulation arose like a wall across his quickened interest. But he braced himself with more than customary stoutness of undaunted zeal.

"Jane, I must do it; it's like a duty on me."

"You do what you think, of course." Her tone placed a large "But" after her sentence, leaving a frayed end to imply the extraordinary perplexity of the whole proceeding.

Nevertheless he held to his intention, sallying out in a merciless morning with something less of conviction but with something more of obstinacy than the previous evening had known in him.

It was not till late in the afternoon he returned. It was snowing without. The bitter rain of the previous day had risen to the first Arctic gale of the winter. As he flung open the door his voice sang out for her, and when she appeared she saw he had a drooping figure in his charge.

"What a dreadful day!" she exclaimed.

"Thank God for it!" he burst out with mock jollity, for she caught in his voice the touch of emotion that trembled on tears, and he disavowed it in this robust fashion. "See! here's a charge for you, that the snow won me. Jane, my dear, look after her, poor girl! and we'll talk afterwards."

Rose was enveloped by his large overcoat, and he was without. His arm was about her, supporting her.

Childless Mrs. Bradley grew mother at the sight of Rose, on whom illness had marked its not uncertain

hand. Had it not been for Mr. Bradley's arm she must certainly have fallen. Her face was blue with cold, and her teeth chattered. Moreover, her eyes were half closed, and it seemed her mind wandered.

Calling to her servant—a woman as like to herself as could well be, and a household adjunct; one who proffered shrewd advice in the safe certainty of its adoption—Mrs. Bradley took her new charge under her wing. Mr. Bradley betook himself to the fire his wife had just left, ostensibly to warm himself, but more really to unloose an emotion that he desired none to notice.

"Perishing day; ah, bitter weather!" he muttered to himself, as suspicious salt drops beaded his cheeks. "Quite makes my eyes water, drat it! Poor girl! Just in time, too. I wonder when Jane's coming. She'll be glad I brought her when she knows. Drat this cold!" He flourished a handkerchief to demolish the visible tokens of his emotion.

Presently Mrs. Bradley appeared. She took in the situation as touching him at a glance, and spoke immediately of Rose.

"We've put her in the spare room. We've got a grand fire in it, and Alice is making her some broth. I'm afraid we shall have to call a doctor."

"Do so, Jane; do so, dear!"

"Where did you find her? How did you come to get her away in the middle of the day?"

"Oh, my dear, such a tale." Vigorously he blew his nose.

Mrs. Bradley settled herself to hear.

"She didn't come out of Simpson's till very late, you see, and by that time the weather was getting bad—you know, wind cold; it wasn't snowing. But she didn't go anywhere in the town at all—nowhere; went

right out of it, up towards the Sugarloaf. I followed her, of course. Directly she got out of the town, she started crying, yes, my dear, did really." The handkerchief was called in for new brandishings, and Mrs. Bradley turned to poke the fire. "Crying and groaning to herself. Made me feel quite bad. Well, she went on; and of course I went on. Presently she came to the Deep Hole. You've never been up there, have you?"

"No!"

"Horrible place! Never knew how horrible it was till to-day. Green and deep; no one knows how deep. It's said some big man in history—I don't know who—drowned himself there. Everybody keeps away from it."

"Yes; well?"

"When she got to the Hole she took out a bag of something and started eating. I couldn't see what it was; and she didn't see me, you know. She wouldn't have seen me if I had been right close, for she was evidently thinking, and worried. She didn't get on very quickly with the eating; and presently she got up and threw the whole bag into the water, and started crying again. It was terrible."

Mrs. Bradley looked up at him. To her there seemed nothing so very terrible in throwing a parcel into a pool of water. The thought communicated itself to him.

"Yes," said he, "it was terrible. You know, funny instincts come on one unaccountably, and I felt just sure then that she meant destroying herself."

"No!"

"Yes." His reply was emphatic. "I'm sure of it. She walked up and down there, wringing her hands in a terrible way; and it began to snow. She looked the

way the snow was coming for a bit, then went on walking up and down. I stood there by a tree, and didn't know what to do. I felt I couldn't go breaking in on her, it was too sacred. I was below, you see, and she was up on the crest against the snow. I shall never forget the look of it till I die. There she was, walking up and down against the driving snow, not crying, but moaning to herself. She's got some big trouble, my dear; we'll find that out later. I saw that then.

"Still, that kind of thing couldn't go on. So I made my way quietly up to her; and when I got fairly near, I called to her, lightly and very kindly. She turned and when she saw me, she just shrank away. It made me feel very strange. It was very pitiful, Jane. I spoke to her a long, long time. I told her she had got nothing to be afraid of; that I meant her well. Then she got angry, and said she didn't believe in anybody. She said the whole world was harsh and unkind, that even the earth was unkind; why did it want to send winter then, just when she could least bear it? She got very angry against the winter; in fact, she began to wander, and that just gave me my opportunity. She went on saying there was no kindness or trust or companionship anywhere, not even in the fields and hills; that her only friend was that Hole (she called it her Pool), and she meant never to leave it. So I just quietly got out of my coat, and going up to her I put it over her shoulders. That finished her. 'Thank you, sir!' she said, in such a dignified way, and so tearfully. I loved the girl for that. Well, that finished it. She came with me then. You see, her heart was just hungry for a bit of kindness, that's how it was. I just put my arm about the thing, and brought her down. All the way down she just clung to me, affectionately, Jane; yes, and pitifully so. It was almost

extravagant the way she did so. It made me—yes, well, I may as well confess it, made me feel quite—tearful, you know.”

“I’m very glad you brought her, dear.” Mrs. Bradley’s voice was softly toned. “I’ll just go and see how the poor girl is getting on.”

So she conveniently left him to lusty nose-blowings.

## XXXII

ROSE was ill; very ill. She had been ill for some time, more ill than she knew; but now she relinquished herself to it, and it came on her in a mighty tide. She had stood against it hitherto, in very desperation, knowing that to give way would be the end of all things. The great tides had gathered without her bulwarks, but she had withheld. By force of will she had clung to health of mind and body. She had upheld her bulwarks. But now, in sheer weariness and loneliness of mind, that she sank into a rest provided for her, and forsook her bulwarks, the waters surged in and overwhelmed.

The doctor pronounced her case as meningitis. Yet even in her illness of mind her will struggled through to resist too great a revelation of herself in her wanderings. So far she succeeded, that she was strong enough yet to shroud the lesser details. The one outstanding matter of her state became soon told out and apparent.

The antique Alice, as true a portion of the domestic economy as an ancient time-piece, had added to her innumerable tasks that of nurse-in-chief to Rose. It became her duty, and she fulfilled it with stoutness. It no less pleased her goodly sense of officiousness.

Whatever passed in the Bradley's household had by necessity to centre in her. She was its subconscious cerebration; and inasmuch as it left Mrs. Bradley to the more wilful functions her mistress was not ill-pleased.

It was she discovered the fact first, and communicated it in awesome whisper to Mrs. Bradley. Had she conveyed the news with a trumpet-tongue there had been few to hear; but such matters best befit the huskier tones. The discreet information found Mrs. Bradley incredulous. Alice fell back on her infallibility. This was a thing that Mrs. Bradley had never yet dared to call into question. She left Alice therefore to ruminate; and found familiarity with the uncomfortable thing accustom her mind to it, and, moreover, give an explanation for the main mystery of Rose's loneliness and wanderings.

To her husband, therefore, that night she broached the fell news; and found him strangely unperturbed. Indeed, it almost seemed that he was prepared for such news.

"Did you know of this?" Mrs. Bradley asked this of her husband, knowing he did not, and yet perplexed at his calmness.

"No, Jane, no! But she's a good girl, I think. Of course, I knew there was some trouble. So it's this, is it?"

"But it's terrible.

"Yes, so it is. Poor girl. No wonder she was——"

"I mean for us."

Mr. Bradley drew up startled, to face a new perplexity altogether.

"It puts us in a most difficult position," his wife stated to him.

"H'm! I suppose it does. But still——"

"But still what?"

"We can't flinch from it, can we?"

"But see what an awkward light it puts us into!"

"Still we must go on with it now, mustn't we?" He seemed to find this a rock for his feet rather than a perplexity before him. "That is so, isn't it, Jane?" he said again to his pondering wife.

"We can send her to the hospital."

"Jane!"

The horror in his voice made her ashamed of her proposition.

"But, James, you don't recognize things."

"Things! What *things*?"

"Difficulties."

"Difficulties?"

"Yes, difficulties." She avoided the explicitness he pressed her to, awkwardly and with hesitation.

"There are no difficulties. She's here, and we just go on with it. We can afford it, I am glad to say."

"But there are social difficulties."

"Oh!" He gathered himself together for an effort. "Excuse my language, dear, I must say it—damn Society; yes, damn Society!" He seemed to find great unction in the expletive, and rubbed his hands on it. "Since they found out I was a saddler once, they didn't want me. Good! It helps me now; I'm glad of it. Though if I'd had just a bit more money they would have been all over me, even if I'd been a sweep. Let me see, they bar her too. Good, good! We'll help each other." He walked up and down in front of his hearth in joy of the discovery.

"But there are other difficulties too." Mrs. Bradley fought perplexedly with the situation, and its enormity.

"Other difficulties?"



"Yes, moral difficulties."

"Oh, Jane!" A note of hopelessness rang in his voice. "That you should talk like that! Look, my love. I'm an old man, I can talk to you as a young man can't talk to his wife—you know, she'd think he was special-pleading. Didn't she do a natural thing?"

"A natural——" The decrescendo died in a silence of contemplation.

"Yes, didn't she now? I don't know her history—I dare swear she's a good, kind lass—I don't want to know it, we'll get that later. But, say she did wrong! Still isn't there nature in it?"

Silence stretched before him. He faced it awhile, then continued—

"Did she embezzle?"

Still there was silence.

"Did she cheat? Did she lie? Did she promote bad companies? Did she beat down poor men? Did she overwork assistants? Good God! when you come to think of it." He footed to and fro on the rug, working himself into high excitement, finding measures for his words by vigorously rubbing his hands.

"You know she didn't. My betting's on her face and her manner to me that she's too pure and lovely for any of these things. No, she did what we've been doing all these years."

"James!" Mrs. Bradley's face looked up with an expression of utmost horror, and abashed him.

"Didn't she?" His query was put more gently.

"There's a tremendous difference."

"My love, you're married, you're standing up for wifedom—very right and proper, too!"

"But it's much more than that!"

He stood facing her, looking on her. Her meaning broke on him.

"H'm, I see what you mean. But supposing she was willing to stand to it. Suppose the other party—eh, threw her off, betrayed her!" A sudden illumination seemed to flash through his mind. "Why, of course, that's it! That's why she's so bitter; that's whom she's crying out against." Another ray went through his mind, and he went ramping up and down the hearth-rug again. "It always is, it always is. I'm not going to let that poor child suffer; and I'll tell you why. It's always the poor girls that suffer, and nine times out of ten it's the girls who are willing to stand to the fact, and the men who turn tail. Oh, I know; I'm not a man for nothing; I've been about. Jane, if all the men who make mischief, and then turn tail, were whipped to-day—by Heaven, more than half the men in England would be jumping about with sore backs. Yes, you laugh, but that's it, never doubt me!"

His wife smiled sadly into the fire. He himself stood over her hoping he had won his point. But he felt the issue hung in a doubt. He did not know what to do. He gave himself up to rapid thinking, with no avail. Moreover, he felt she was slipping back again into the refuge of meaningless grooves of thought. Suddenly a thought broke on him, and almost before he thought it he spoke it.

"Jane, let's have prayers!"

"Prayers?" Family prayers had dropped out of usage for some long while, tacitly and by consent, and she marvelled.

"Yes, family prayers! Don't let's talk about it. Just let's do it. It's an idea of mine."

"Very well. But I'd better go and explain to Alice. She won't understand it."

So out she went. No sooner had she gone than he took down a Bible, and with considerable difficulty

found a certain passage. Having found it, he turned the leaf down, and returned the book to its place.

When Mrs. Bradley came in with Alice he took the book down again, and, turning over its leaves, found, as though by chance, the passage he had marked. At its conclusion, he re-read the latest portions of it.

Prayers over, Alice went out.

"Well, Jane?" he asked.

He found no reply.

"That was what you call good doctrine, eh?"

"Still——" Mrs. Bradley started her protest, but proceeded no further with it.

"Well, you can't get better authority, you know. That *is* morality, the top of morality. 'And He asked her, Doth no man accuse thee?' Of course she said, 'No man, Lord,' for He'd sent them to the clear right-about; they'd all done it in their time, every man jack of them. And then think, 'Neither do I condemn thee!' I think the morality part's pretty safe, Jane. I'm not going to condemn where He wouldn't. The best morality is kindness, you know, after all."

Mrs. Bradley said nothing. He went over to her.

"Fancy, my dear, you wouldn't ruin her for an accident?"

"Accident!" Indignation mounted insurgent in her voice.

"Yes, accident. You know, love, you'd not worry if she hadn't had a child. That's what worries you. Don't talk of moralities if you mean perplexities. And if you do mean perplexities, why then it's owing to selfishness. Good Heavens! as if other people had done so much for us that we need mind their opinion!"

## XXXIII

It was a half-won battle; but the first half was so won that the latter half followed consequent upon it. Her native kindliness was what remained to be won in the teeth of her prudery and selfishness. And when Alice informed her that Rose had regained consciousness, it was she who then took charge of the sick-room, letting Rose know by deft allusions that they proposed to shelter her and make a home for her, knowing well what it meant for them and for Rose.

It perplexed Rose. She lay seeking to grapple with it, but relinquished the effort for very weariness. As she grew stronger, however, she fought with it. The bitterness that her illness had laid low raised its head. She knew not what to do; but it came continually before her that as soon as she could she would flee these people.

Once when Mrs. Bradley was in the room tending her she raised the subject.

"My dear," said Mrs. Bradley, laying her hand on Rose's forehead, "my husband and I were talking of you this morning. He wishes you, if you will, to remain right on with us; and I'm very glad he does, for I should be very sorry to lose you. We've never had a child. Your name's Rose, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Rose feebly, scarcely realizing what she heard.

"I like the name Rose."

"But do you know——?" Rose raised her brow in query, as the meaning of the thing shaped itself before her.

"Yes, Rose, we know most things. Not all, of course. That you must tell us when you get well."

But Rose would not linger further with it. Brokenly, and in fragments, Mrs. Bradley learnt all that there was to learn—all save the matter of the wanderings, about which she was very uncertain, knowing but dimly that she had sought to escape an enormity that was relentless in its pursuit, the only peace being that afforded by the deep green-mantled pool of her frequentings.

When Mr. Bradley heard the tale, the melting mood alternated in him with indignation, until the latter overshot all proper bounds of utterance.

"Her father put her out, did he?" he vociferated. "Good Heavens! and calls himself a preacher! Jane, I'm sorry I read that passage! No, I'm not, though. I don't see why we let these tub-thumpers monopolize the old book. And this other rascal too! Needs a horse-whipping!"

"She has had an unfortunate experience," said she quietly.

Thus these souls took Rose into their keeping, and after her convalescence took her away that her later illness should take place far from Brokenfield; to which place they returned eventually, a company of four.



## BOOK II

## ACTIONS





# I

"It's simply astonishing that the people permit it. My tongue is of course unfortunately tied by the fact that my practice largely extends among these land-owners. But still, right is right, and I've been a Liberal all my life. I was one when I was a young man your age, and I'm so still, which is a fairly consistent record. In some of my opinions I don't agree with the Liberal party as at present constituted, but then it's they who have changed and not I. I don't change. I believe in making up your mind and sticking to it. But still, I'm wandering. I think this speech of Langland's an admirable one, and I hope it'll rouse the masses as it ought to. If they only saw their power, they'd carry all before them. But, then, they're cradled in phrases and promises till they don't know right from wrong. Crafty devils, these Tories. Still, some of the things Langland said ought to open their eyes. Listen to this!"

Dr. Denzil stood before his hearth as he gave this out. Attired in professional grey frock suit he looked the perfect embodiment of sleekness and elegance. He was of medium height, inclined to fleshiness. His sartorial equipment was faultless, and—a rarer achievement—conceived in taste. Such jewellery as he had on (a tie-pin, a ring and a watch-chain) seemed as though it peeped coyly forth upon the world, eschewing of all things the brandishing of mere glitter. He was grey-eyed, and his lofty forehead sloped away beneath grey hairs.

His audience consisted of a single young man, evi-

dently his son. It seemed to perturb him little that this young man only heeded him so far as to be able to interpose the correct monosyllabic encouragement, the body of his attention being given to a volume of Walter Pater that lay on the arm of the capacious chair he occupied.

When Dr. Denzil had finished the encouraging quotation, he looked forth again, using the paper to brandish aloft in the course of his periods—

“There’s the thing in a nutshell. That’s what I call a rousing idea. It puts mettle into all of us. Mark you, Langland’s not a great man. He’s not magnetic, he’s merely electric. Still, he says good things, and he says them well. His humour is sometimes quite biting. I don’t wonder the Tories hate him. His purpose is quite obvious, he wants to rouse the passions of the mob. Quite right, too; why shouldn’t he? Haven’t they got as much right to their passions as their masters? It’s the only way you’ll ever get them to see that they’re being humbugged. If I were in their place, I would not put up with their state of affairs for a single minute. Still, Langland’s not a genius; he has got a bit of courage, that’s all. It’s quite amazing what little men we’ve got in our public life—little in every way, little most of all in the sense that they have no personality. Take Langland, for example! Quite the most vital of them all, and yet what is he? It makes one lose hope. I’d like to have taken to politics myself, and yet you’ve got to have money to play that game. But what do you think of this speech, Harry?”

Harry Denzil withdrew a sidelong eye from Pater, and chanced the reply that he had been meditating some while ago, thinking that by it he might have purchased the peace he sought.

"I don't see much value in it. I agree with his sentiments, of course, perhaps a bit better than he does. They've been talking now—how long? A good time, anyway. And what has it succeeded in doing? Changing one oligarchy about for another. I don't see much good in talk, anyhow; I'd like to see something done. If there was a revolution to-morrow, I wouldn't care to bet on Langland helping the people. But as long as he gets a cool salary he'll make speeches to the crack of doom."

Dr. Denzil rolled uncanny eyes at his son, and bit on his lip to bridle his annoyance. He looked particularly venomous when annoyed. His eye took a yellow hue, and shot malignant lights. Harry was not looking at his father, however, and therefore did not notice the transformation in him.

"You've got a most annoying way of speaking, Harry, which I don't like at all, and which I'll trouble you to drop. It's nothing more or less than simple arrogance. You've got a most extraordinarily inflated notion of yourself, and you'll do yourself no good in the world by it. It's in your best interests I speak."

Harry said nothing, but turned to Walter Pater again. His father glowered down at him awhile, then went on reading his paper.

The tension was released by a sudden opening of the door, and a voice that started exclaiming even before the door was opened—

"I say, father, is this the prescription for Mrs. Bradley?"

"Yes, dear," said Dr. Denzil, rolling a somewhat less vexed eye over it rapidly. "Fancy my not naming it. But you must hurry up with it, Cicely, it's got to go to-day."

"Why, is Mrs. Bradley bad?"

"Touch and go—I don't tell them so, of course."

"Oh, well, I don't suppose any one'll miss her."

Cicely Denzil tripped across the room as she said this. She was but nineteen—some five years younger than her brother—and she fulfilled the function of dispenser to her father, having, in fact, not been very long at this duty. Her mother was dead, and she chose this rather than the duty of housekeeper. In truth, Dr. Denzil had resisted her for reasons of his own. But she had chosen it for the shrewd reason that it gave her the lesser work of the two, with the additional charm of providing her with an emolument over and above her allowance. This she had insisted on, and Dr. Denzil had not yet discovered any method of refusing whatever whims seized on her.

Presently she burst in again.

"That prescription can't go to Mrs. Bradley to-day!"

"Can't go!" Dr. Denzil dropped his paper in astonishment. "Why can't it go? It must go."

"Well, it can't, father. To-day is Tim's holiday, and there's nobody to take it."

Tim was "buttons," "boots," messenger and general seat of all mischief in Dr. Denzil's household.

"Oh, dash that boy! Why a boy like that wants holidays, I can't think. Wherever one turns one's bound hand and foot by servants. I don't know what England's coming to. The working-classes are getting out of all hand."—Harry looked up, and regarded his father curiously.—"Instead of being only too glad at getting a good situation, where he has got a good home and good food, he must have days off; and it always falls on an awkward day."

He regarded his daughter.

"I'm not going. Not on a miserable day like this."

Vexation crossed his face. Professional punctiliousness demanded there should be no delay.

"I'll go," proffered Harry, rising, and putting Pater beneath his arm.

"Will you? There's a dear old boy!" His sister spoke.

"Have you got it ready?"

"It's not *it*, it's *them*; there are two bottles."

"Well, have you got *them* ready, then?"

"No. But I won't be a minute. You go and get your 'bike' ready; I'll have them ready by the time you've done."

"I shan't 'bike,' I'll walk; I want a walk. Look sharp, Cicely!"

"Oh, I won't be a minute," and she fled.

As Harry was going out of the room his father addressed him—

"And, Harry, tell Mr. Bradley, will you, that I shall be round the last thing to-night? Tell him from me that there's no cause for anxiety. He's a bit apt to fuss."

## II

DR. DENZIL'S was a strange household, inasmuch as it was typical of a good many others in the land. Some mysterious tie had held it together that defied examination, and that therefore took refuge in the general term "family." Each member of it had his or her method of procedure, bent of mind, idiosyncrasies of temper, and seemed little disposed to forego any of these little peculiarities in the interests of any other member of the household. Consanguinity is a potent thing, as also is custom; their joint influence was suffi-

ciently strong to hold together a family the units of which seemed to desire nothing so much as to fly off into space at a rapid tangent. The natural forces were centrifugal, the strange and mysterious force defying analysis was centripetal; between these continual warfare waged. That the centripetal reigned supreme was only a continual exasperant to the centrifugal. They all wore one patronymic; they all swore fealty to it; they all regarded it with restless awe. Mrs. Denzil, when alive, had shed a halo over it, a gracious aureole that softened the asperities. Since her death the asperities sprang into active existence. Harry knew Dr. Denzil as arrayed in mysterious paternal robes. To the robes he did obeisance, grudgingly: the man in them he regarded indifferently, though so far was he the victim of the hypnotism exercised by the priestly and paternal vestments that he would have sworn to his affection to the unrolling of abysmal ages, had occasion demanded. Dr. Denzil knew Harry as son to him, and seemed to regard the fact as a considerable affront to his dignity. He always wore the stilts of might in his son's presence; and knowing them uncomfortable, seemed to regard Harry with fierce malignity for having forced him to this penance. Cicely swung her own orbit, in happy disregard of any of the others, were they, like her, planets, or was it even the sun and author of her corporal being. The result was that whatever she wished to have, she had. She wished to be dispenser, she was dispenser, even in despite of the patients' interests; and a housekeeper was procured to fulfil the duties she eschewed. Harry liked his sister, but went his way unconcerned of her. She liked him, but only requisitioned him when she wished something to be done. The other member of the household, Bobby by name, was at school. To his

periodic returns they looked forward with avidity, as affording the excitement of change. For a week or so before, they would begin to think on it. Even Dr. Denzil would bestir himself to interest. But Bobby had not been in the house a few hours before interest in him would vanish down the wind. Cicely would find fault with him for some or other piece of clumsiness; Dr. Denzil would regard him as another and more considerable affront to his dignity; Harry would ask, above all, peace from him; and he would journey out to discover some old crony in the town to fraternize with. In fact, the family had brought the senselessness of corporate existence to a fine art.

It had continually been brought before Harry that he was a very favoured person. He had not long come down from Oxford, which had been thought necessary for him since he was reading for the Bar. Dr. Denzil had wished him to study medicine with a view to aiding him in, and finally taking up, his practice. Harry had evaded this, however, in a quietly stubborn way particularly annoying to his father. Dr. Denzil had spoken to him lengthily on the subject, and Harry had seemed to him convinced beyond a doubt. But subsequent events elicited the fact that Harry's mind had flowed on in the course it chose, inexplicably refusing the new channel hewn out for it with such infinite labour and eloquence. This trait of being mentally convinced, and yet holding fast by an earlier prejudice, perplexed Dr. Denzil to wrath. He denounced it as an undesirably feminine trait. But rhetoric was as fruitless as eloquence.

He had wished to convince Harry; he would probably have got on to ruthless enforcement, save for the interposition of Mrs. Denzil. This lack of faith in his wife was the final despair of the good doctor. For

his most eloquent periods to his stubborn son had begun with the moving cadence "your mother and I." Her defalcation was therefore a double betrayal; it was not alone desertion of him, it was placing a petard under the most important cornice of his argument. He had submitted with the air of one convinced of the faithlessness of all the sons and daughters of men, particularly the daughters. As for her, no sooner was her battle won than she had gone to her rest.

So he had gone to Oxford, from which he had just come down. Early in the following year he proposed going up to London with the view to taking up the matter more completely. At present he was reading regularly, but not heavily. He looked forward with considerable keenness to a forensic career; not that it fulfilled all his aspirations, but it certainly gave him the chance to fulfil himself better than anything else he could think of. At Oxford he had excelled in debate, and he took this as an augur of happy indication for the future. He had not grown to the ripeness yet to see that what he had delighted in was not the processes of arid and lifeless logic, the proper forensic business, but rather the discussion of eager problems, the handling of mighty realities, the more legitimate function of literature. Nor did the turning of his mind towards the great names of literature give him any clue as to his more real self.

Thus he had begun to drift. The tides have much to do with human life, as also the ruling winds. But they are not omnipotent. There is a rudder at each ship, and an intelligence to guide it need not be wanting. But that the rudder should not fall into desuetude, nor the intelligence to atrophy, one thing is demanded. It is a goal. Whatever the occasion be, if there be no goal, rudders exist for a sneer in the hind-



most of each vessel, and intelligences become a hideous mockery. Driftage succeeds; cynicism after. Harry had found no goal, for the Bar was slowly becoming a habit of his thought. It became a tide, and he drifted in it; as yet only drifted.

### III

A SHARP wind was blowing through Brokenfield as Harry made his way through its streets pensively, one bottle thrust in each pocket. November was drawing to a close, and Boreas loomed somewhere away on his far north-eastern frontier with distended cheek. So well he blew that the streets were already deserted. Harry's steps rang out clearly on the pavements, then died suddenly away as the gusts took them swiftly down to the curling Thames. Now and then a sharp spray of rain stung his cheek, but he knew that when the god waxed thus wrath he had no time for tears. Shops hung out goods for display; and as he passed their doors he could see the assistants within surreptitiously swinging their arms about their bodies to induce an inner warmth to defy the outer rigours. Their masters had in most cases advisedly betaken themselves to their firesides, for custom there was none.

His thoughts were with the perplexity of Sebastian van Storck (which the rigour of the day impressed on him) as he rang the bell at Mr. Bradley's house. When the door opened his thoughts were still on the Netherland marshes, and he awoke with a start to find himself contemplated by a vision whose beauty was not even effaced by her tear-wet eyes.

"Oh, can I see Mr. Bradley?" he asked.

"I don't know. I'm afraid you can't. Can I give him any message?"

"No, I don't think you can. My name is Denzil. I've come round from my father."

"Oh, come in, will you?"

He made his way into a dark hall, and so into a room in the hearth of which leapt an ample fire, towards which he promptly made his way. In the room a child was reading, with ponderous seriousness scarce befitting his age. No light had yet been lit, and it seemed a marvel that reading could be done.

"Go into the kitchen for a while, Jim," said his fair conductor; "there's a nice fire there."

The child looked up with an uncannily shrewd look, with a mien of almost disquieting sagacity.

"All right, mother," he said, and disappeared with his book.

Harry looked sharply from one to the other. It seemed incredible that this girl was a mother, and the mother of such a child. He took refuge in perplexity.

"You've come very quickly. Can't Dr. Denzil come?" she spoke.

"I'm afraid I don't understand you. I came round with the medicines, our kiddy messenger being away."

"Oh." Her voice broke off sharply with understanding, caught by a sob. "Mother's dead. We've just sent for Dr. Denzil."

"Oh, I am so sorry! Fancy my not seeing that. Eh—forgive my obtuseness!"

"Of course you didn't know." She roused herself to defend him against his own accusation.

He groped now in active perplexity. Brokenfield was sufficiently large a town to merge the identities of a family, save when they figured in the eye of ostentation. Even so, he had small knowledge of its inhab-

itants. But he had thought the Bradleys to be childless; and this apostrophe of Mrs. Bradley as "mother" bewildered him. He grappled, too, with the perplexity, the perennial perplexity, of finding words fit to express sympathy from one who sorrowed not to another who did.

"I *am* so sorry," he stumbled. "Of course, I see it now. I had come with a message to Mr. Bradley from my father. Of course, that's needless now."

They stood opposite one another in the gloom. He knew she wept. He could not see her face. The shadow of her sorrow fell on him, and drew them together.

"You will permit me to express my very deep sympathy." He drew a little nearer to her as he spoke. His voice was touched with dignity and tenderness. "Of course, your trouble is outside me, but I do sympathize. I, too, lost a mother once, though I was only a nipper at the time."

He heard her weep; and her voice was broken as she spoke—

"She was not really my mother, though she acted like a real mother to me. I only called her mother. My—my name is Mrs. Foggetty."

A motor-car drew up with a roar outside the house.

"That's my father, I expect," said Harry. "I had better be going, I fancy."

She made him no reply, but went to open the door to Dr. Denzil, whose voice rang unpleasantly familiar to Harry in the hall outside. "No, don't come up. I know my way up," he heard him say with professional bonhomie. "Mr. Bradley is there, I suppose." And with that he heard him make his way up the stairs.

Rose re-entered from the now lighted hall.

"I must go," said he, and yet felt strangely disin-

clined to go. Moreover, he felt that she desired companionship.

While he fought with his determination to go, a tear-stained Alice entered to light the gas, and brooding sorrow was suddenly thrown up into severe light. Rose, too, leapt out of gloom into distinctness, and her misty beauty hung before him like a fair dusk that the rain eclipses. Her task accomplished, the busy Alice went, thus to occupy her grief with labour, as fit medicine for sorrow. No such antidote had Rose, and Harry stood there knowing that for him to leave her would be for her to relapse on the loneliness of sorrow. So he wished to stay, and with native directness put his intention as it came to him, couching it in the frame of a proposition.

"I don't like leaving you though, Mrs.—er—Foggetty." He stumbled over the badge of widowhood for her. "Should I wait for my father, do you think? Then, you see, we can each be given over to the charge of our respective parents." He turned his sentence to quivering humour under the pressure of awkwardness.

"Thank you, if you would." Rose clutched at the companionship. "Won't you sit down?"

"Thanks, that would be rather a happy notion."

Conversations under the shadow flung by the wing of sorrow are depressing affairs. But Harry threw no mock fealty to grief. Her gloomy garments of convention he set lightly aside. Something of instant Nature was in him. To her remorseless unconcern for death he brought, however, the kindlier because wiser heart of man. To her it is nought, a passing incident of growth. Her eye is ever forward, she spurns the backward glance. To him it is, for the living, an unutterable woe. His heel wins the tribute of

brutality if he fails to foot the valley of death with a due and tender tread. Her large processes are restful as the inevitable is restful, merely. If he wins to rest, it is through cognizance and learned wisdom.

But this much of Nature had Harry, that he failed to give to Sorrow more than was her meet due. He did not distort his features, or hang an arras of black uncomely crape over his heart. He did not foreswear jest, for he knew jest a very kindly creature. Rose, therefore, found herself turning to him as to a gracious breeze that braces as it soothes. He knew nothing of the household. Had he done so, temptation would doubtless have won him to weighty and gloomy condolences. As it was, however, he turned to the subjects that lay next him, and these happened to be the furthest remove from the woe that had smitten her. He spoke on subjects political and literary, and stepped forward quickly on ground that carried him; for to his delight her mind followed him, and aided him by quick understanding.

They had not long to speak so; nevertheless, when Dr. Denzil came down the stairs, with a breeziness ill-timed because unnatural, followed by Mr. Bradley, they had wandered off on to the question of sex in literature, the functional distinction betwixt masculine and feminine methods. Dr. Denzil's advent down the stairs struck like a chill blast upon them, bringing back cognizance of themselves, with consequent awkwardness.

"See, here's my father, I must go," said Harry, making his way into the hall.

"Hullo, Harry, you here!" his father greeted him, as though his grey paternal eyes had hungered for so welcome a sight.

"I've been here the whole time," said Harry quietly,

pulling one of his bottles half-way out of his pocket in explanation of his presence there. "I thought I would wait for you to go back with."

"Quite right, quite right! I'm glad you did, my boy." His manner was affectionately buoyant. "Bradley, this is my son; you haven't met him yet, have you?"

"No, but I'm glad to now." Mr. Bradley spoke with suppressed quietness.

Dr. Denzil seemed to ignore Rose's presence, and she had slipped back into the dining-room. When it came to the waving salutation of farewell Harry missed her, and so it came about that he went off without addressing her again. Rose felt strangely wounded at this. She scoffed at herself for her folly in expecting him to have sought her out for farewell. Nevertheless, it created an ache in her, the more particularly after Dr. Denzil's ignoring of her.

As for Dr. Denzil, on their rapid journey back home he discoursed largely to an unattentive Harry. He rolled his tongue through a universe, as it was his wont to do. Harry sat back in his place, draped about with rugs, with the blood in him wonderfully stirred at an attentive face that had regarded him, and a thought that gave him to feel that understanding went step by step with him. It opened life to him, such life as had hovered temptingly in the distance once or twice in Oxford, when some beauty had stricken him, or when at his Debating Society attentive brows gave him the touch of power.

Meanwhile, beside him a rolling eloquence poured out, and he knew that there, at least, he was decreed a listener to the crack of doom.

## IV

THE following day a figure was seen hovering about the corners of the street in which Mr. Bradley's house lay. It passed the house once or twice, coming up to it as though about to enter, and then passing rapidly by. It took then to the other side of the road, and hung hesitatingly about. Then it disappeared. In half-an-hour's time it reappeared, and, after more peripatetic revolutions, made up to the house with a quick stride and rang the bell.

Alice appeared, with a query as to the business required, then, seeing it was Harry, said—

"Oh, Mr. Denzil, you want to see Mr. Bradley?"

"Yes," said Harry, though it was not Mr. Bradley he wished to see.

He had taken his step, and, as usual with most such bold steps, he knew of nothing more than the step he had ventured. Everything further was darkness. As he stood in the cold chill drawing-room he felt half-amused. Retreat being impossible, humour was the only relief. When Alice came to ask him into the warmer dining-room, where a fire and Mr. Bradley awaited him, he had not even defined the purpose of his visit. He left it to take shape with occasion.

"Ah, Mr. Denzil, it's so kind of you to come round," Mr. Bradley greeted him kindly. Rose was in the room.

"I came partly on my father's account, to express his sympathy—and if I may say so, mine also—and partly on my own account, to apologize for my going off yesterday without taking leave of Mrs. Foggetty." The citation of his father as excuse for his visit was a ruse little likely to be discovered, for Dr. Denzil had

as a rule not a considerable amount of sympathy or attention to pour out on the families of defunct patients. It was not professional to do so. He turned to Rose: "I hope you forgive me, it was horribly rude of me, I know; but I did look for you."

She did forgive him, and draped him with royalty for his thought.

"It's very kind of your father, I'm sure," said Mr. Bradley.

It was obvious to Harry that Mr. Bradley strode quickly over the uncertain soil of a wounded heart, so he did not pursue the theme.

"That's all I came about, I'm afraid," said Harry, then. "I didn't want to break in on you just now, but I didn't want to let my rudeness go by with time." His attention was on Rose now. This humbler house somehow put a bitter distaste in his mouth against that which he called home. Even in the shadow of sorrow it glowed warmly for him.

"Won't you stay just a while, and have some wine?" Mr. Bradley spoke more gravely than it was his wont to do. All his buoyancy seemed crushed out of him. His gravity was preternatural. Even Harry, who did not know him, heard calamity in his steady voice.

Harry would stay, and did. Before their roaring fire he sat with Mr. Bradley and Rose, and spoke on general topics with much less of deftness than he had evinced the previous evening. He delayed going as long as possible. But compulsion drove him eventually; and he took his way back to his home with an ache at the heart of him.

"What an exceedingly nice young man," said Mr. Bradley to Rose when Harry had gone, "one would never think him son to Dr. Denzil; though, mind you,



Dr. Denzil's an admirable man in his way. I hope we shall see more of him. I like him."

Rose acquiesced. Her sentiments spoke louder than her speech, but her thoughts would not link Dr. Denzil in any approbation that was a-wing.

She had cause to dislike the important doctor. That he alone in all Brokenfield outside the immediate household of the Bradleys knew her secret, was in truth a cause of timidity, but not less necessarily of dislike. That he treated her loftily by reason of it, was sufficient to stir the deeper antagonism in the bosom of a saint. She made no pretensions to saint-hood anyway, and deep in her heart she disliked the doctor. Nay, she rather grew to despising him.

Jim, her child, was the only evidence of a broken maidenhood. He it was, therefore, that called up the necessity, first suggested by Mr. Bradley, of donning the marital prefix to her name. Seven years had endeavoured futilely to reconcile her to the fact. But she knew the world's ostracism for her misfortune, and winced at its judgment. Of late she had grown young again, but the first years had aged her in appearance and in thought. She had shrank from contact with an outer world, clinging pitifully to the parents of her adoption. They were all to her, and by her very loving service to them she had made herself dear to them. A deep and genuine affection had grown up in the household; deeper, far more natural than much pretended affection vaunted in consanguine ties. She had written to her mother at Oldhamlet telling her of her safety, had indeed been in the habit of writing her regularly. Subsequently, they had met many times, by appointment in London. Her father had wished to see her, but she had resolutely refused to see him. This had brought its own cleavage between her and

her mother, making their meetings less frequent. Over a year before this time her mother had died, and she had not been informed of the burial till after its occurrence. The reason was obvious to her, but it did not tend to reconcile her to Andrew Foggetty. Save that he had taken a smaller farm, still near Oldhamlet, she heard nothing of him. She had been transplanted, however, into such a home as she had not hitherto known, and youth came again upon her.

Yet, even now, having grown to youth again, she shrank from contact with the world. The spirit may not ever be broken. It will ever regenerate a crushed wound. So, after her first years of bitterness and ageing, her bloom of youth threw up its head again into the day of sun, to expand and burgeon to its own fit beauty. And it succeeded. She was younger now than she had been four years back. Her cheeks were fuller; they wore fresher roses; her eye grew more lustrous; her manner gayer; but, deeper still and more important yet, her mind grew less bitter, less pitifully tender and sensitive; her spirit seemed less and less that of a broken, wounded, fluttering bird, seeking to wing the air, but clinging pathetically to earth, giving fearful attention to hedgerows and shelter, thinking hungrily of the vast blue depths its kindred flew. She came back to life. But her son was a bitter hindrance to her. Not only by his very existence. For the crises she passed through as she bore him were hung out in his character for a perpetual reminder to her. He had been sturdy enough of body, but strange of mind. Not that insanity touched him. Rather, he was preternaturally sane. If insanity is not the obsession of the mind to one thing to the preclusion of all others, then it is nothing. This is the test of insanity; and its contrary is the test of sanity. The opposite to insanity

is wisdom; and wisdom is the mind embracing the largest possible range of existent facts—contradictory or not, even though they defy synthesis; for Truth, the goal of Wisdom, may not neglect anything that exists. Though we see her not, she is the synthesis of all, fused into a magnificent unity of perfection.

Jim Foggetty—for even the State may not deny a child taking his mother's name, even though it cruelly taunt his misfortune—had a preternaturally sane mind. It mocked his youth. His width of perception, the astonishing range and accuracy of his instinct, was uncanny. He went early to books. He neglected all accidentals of life. He quivered with vitality; but shunned society with deadly fear. His perception of truth in persons was swift and incisive. He saw with equal swiftness into falsehood, exposing it with fearful judgment. In all this Rose saw the progress, ripening, and cataclysm in her own mind as she bore him. She saw it not less in the trances of thought that often held him. She saw it in the revulsions of people, even herself, that seized on him sometimes like a fit. She saw it all, and was amazed to see that her tragedy had been so terrible as to shape her very son in the mould and spirit of it.

Yet it was a continual reminder to her, and served to retard the bloom of youth that sought to expand. Yet, so much of wisdom is there in all things that happen, even this had its gain. For so as youth came again, it came with a newer, fuller wisdom. It was not sufficed to come in forgetfulness of the lessons of the past. It had come by now, but it had come slowly. The sun had shone again, but it was joined with an elder strength, a wider radiance, a loftier brilliance, than before. Her strong emotional nature, fierce with all proper heats, had met the shock of an empiric

world. The shock had laid her soul in dust. But now that her nature had blossomed again, it was no less forceful than before, no less primitive of impulsion and strength, but more sagacious, firmer in its garnered knowledge and understanding.

Such was the Rose Foggetty that Harry Denzil had met.

## V

A FEW days later, as Rose and Mr. Bradley stood beside the open graveside—with the others that had come down to Brokenfield for the occasion, near of kin to the dead—she saw standing aside, with bared head, Harry Denzil, and was warmed at the sight. A pang shot through her as she compared him with the strange old people that had come down to sorrow; heavy-figured, heavy-minded, heavy-souled, all of them. She turned to the murmuring of the service, however, and afterwards she missed him.

After this he became a frequent visitor round at the house, conversing on politics not only with Mr. Bradley himself, but also taking care to introduce her into the field. He took to bringing her books, and to discussing them with her. He never saw the widow in her, since Jim seldom came near them. Once Harry met the child, and, being amazed at his wild sagacity, fell to conversing with him as to a man of equal age with him. This Rose noticed, and attributed to kindness. But to him, subsequently, it gave considerable cause of perplexity and cogitation. He took to imagining Rose not a maiden, and it revolted him. He called it an unclean thought of his that he should deem a function of Nature an unclean thing: and this

brought him back to sanity. It gave him a field of combat, nevertheless. But when he next saw Rose, his perplexities flew down the wind.

In fine, he was warming to her, and she, less rapidly, to him, half wittingly maybe, but without deliberate cognizance of themselves. He saw conquest before him; and strode to it. He had learnt the fact that the impetuous will is half the battle with women. It was self-knowledge with him, and he yearned for an opportunity to manifest power. The human soul pants for power, and at home he was bruised and battered with the power that some one else not only panted for, but achieved. Here a fair victory opened to him: it wooed him, and he floated to it. Moreover, Life opened to him. Life called across the waters, and he snatched the rudder. A goal beckoned him, and he steered for it with firm hand and ardent thought.

## VI

THE weeks went forward, and she began to grow aware of herself. With that, fear set in. Fear awoke, and called to distrust; the voice of distrust sounded the note to alarm, that called with clarion tongue through her soul.

"Not for me, not for me," she uttered to herself. "If he knew my story he would have nothing to do with me. They're all the same. Besides, I value my freedom too much. A woman doesn't give up that sort of thing now-a-days. I'm bound to stick now to father here, but later on I may be useful. Yes, the past is really a blessing, or it may be; at any rate, it lies with me to make it so. No, I won't throw it all

away. I want freedom. I certainly don't want to be spurned as I certainly will be if this goes on."

Thus when Harry next came round to the house Rose was not to be discovered.

"Glad to see you, Denzil," said Mr. Bradley. "Sit down, and let's talk. Rose'll be here in a minute."

So they talked, Mr. Bradley seeking for elucidation for some knotty points in a bill that was engaging Parliament.

"Bless the girl! Wherever can she have got to?" exclaimed Mr. Bradley presently. He hailed her from an open door.

"I'm helping Alice with the ironing," came a voice up the stairs, sounding knell-like on Harry's ear.

"But Denzil—Mr. Denzil's here!"

"I'll be up presently. You go on talking. Leave men alone for talking: women aren't in it with them."

"Cheeky imp," muttered Mr. Bradley, with a smile of pleased tolerance at the sally. All she did was good to him.

Gloom shrouded Harry as time passed, and she did not appear. It was only as he prepared to go that she came to say farewell. He looked deep reproach at her, but she avoided his glance. Yet, now she was with him she was strangely thrilled. Had Mr. Bradley not been there he would have spoken his reproach. He had to leave it unuttered, but he felt she was not unaware of it.

He felt bitter as he walked home in the frosty moonlight. The houses were limned clearly and coldly; sleeping peacefully in a glister of frost, under an arch of silver night. The pavements scintillated beneath his eye as he paced them. He was annoyed. He was annoyed with her; though, as her figure floated before his memory, he found it hard to be so. But it touched

him to fierce obstinacy; it aroused him to combativeness. He had scarcely wooed her hitherto; he had, rather, lazily enjoyed her companionship. Woo her henceforth now, he determined to, even though it were an obstinate wooing withal. Previously when he had fought the thought of her widowhood, it had bested him. Despite the fact that he knew it for a touch of fastidious unhealthiness in him, a selfish, if not brutal, lust for a paradisaal houri, the carnal fact had obtruded on his revulsion. Now it was whelmed by a tidal wave of wilful pugnacity. He paced the night with his determination. He knew she had resisted him, though why he knew not. It had called in her voice up the stairs. It lay on the firm attitude of her shoulders as she stood in the hall beside him. He knew—knew now indisputably—that she was not averse to him, else why this determination in avoiding him? “Rum things, women; but, by Jove!”—And with the adjuration he called the hosts of battle up in his mind.

That night he turned the latch at an unusually late hour; and as he took off his coat in the hall, he heard his father’s voice calling him from the consulting room.

“Where have you been, Harry?” was the question that greeted him as he made his appearance.

“Out for a walk.”

“Do you generally go for such lengthy walks on winter evenings?”

“Sometimes, yes.” Harry’s heart beat heavily as he faced his father. All his children feared their father, though Cicely overflowed it sometimes in defiance.

“You’ve not been to the Bradley’s, I suppose.”

Harry’s hope fell: his heart beat yet more heavily.

“Whatever makes you think that?” he asked.

"Never mind what makes me ask it! Have you?" The voice spoke in irascible mastery.

"No." Harry winced as he spoke. A lover of truth he hated the lie, and despised its spokesman as he uttered the word. It was begotten, like most lies, of fear. Dr. Denzil and Harry shared it between them. A lie to a parent is a dreadful thing, frequently occasioned by the parent.

"Because it's not my wish that you should go to that house," went on the paternal injunction.

"May I ask the objection?"

"It's quite sufficient for you that I say so. I have my reasons. As you know, I generally have my reasons for what I say. I think you'll do wisely to leave it at that."

Harry stood amazed. He wondered how his father knew of his visits. He asked the question.

"May I ask, father, what makes you connect me up with Mr. Bradley?" He was careful to avoid Rose.

"Oh, I happened to meet Mr. Bradley in the town the other day, and he seemed to speak of an increasing intimacy with you. You'll be pleased to know that he was kind enough rather to approve of you. Anyhow, they're not the kind of people we Denzils mix with. And besides that, I have other reasons. I hope I make my wish clear to you?"

Harry stood before his father, mute.

"Do you understand me?"

Still there came no reply.

"Do you hear me, Harry?"

"Yes, father." The words fell slowly, obstinately.

"Very well, then. That's all, Harry. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Harry's valedictory had fight in it as he turned from



the room and swung the door after him. He grunted as he made his way up the stairs to his room. When there he lit his pipe, and, sitting up in his chair, thought out things. "The Renaissance" eyed him: futilely, fruitlessly. Deeper, more personal, things were at hand; and he joined issue with them.

"I'll show them who wins things—her and him—by Jove!" he exclaimed as he leapt into bed.

## VII

ROSE had felt Harry's reproach, and she challenged its occasion. Who was she to Harry Denzil, or Harry Denzil to her? Even though he knew not of it, she knew only too well that there was an impenetrable barrier betwixt them; and while she bewailed it, she clung to it in hope of security thereby. Never again would she permit disillusion to break in on her. She fenced such occasion as might bring it.

Thus when next Harry called she avoided him again. She was in the room as he entered, and decency enjoined that she should continue so awhile. When she rose to leave she avoided his eyes, for she knew they were on her, large with reproach. Fairy fingers plucked at her own heart. But she eschewed all temptation to stay, whether it sprang from herself, or came from him.

Her going wrought him to such a pass that he even revealed his state to Mr. Bradley. He missed strands of conversation, and in attempting to pick them up subsequently he picked up the wrong ones, making havoc of the tissue. Preoccupation bound him about, and it was evident an inner fury possessed him. Since his wife's death Mr. Bradley had been preoccupied and

had not sought to find an occasion for Harry's visits. Now it was only too apparent to him what the occasion was.

"Don't you think so?" he asked, referring to a five minutes' disquisition by himself on the nearness of a general election.

"Yes, yes, I do," stumbled Harry, after an unaccountable silence of deliberation. Rose had gone out deliberately to avoid him, that was apparent. Yet she was no coquette: she was too deeply sincere for a coquette; he was prepared to wager that. What was it, then? Was she worth his effort?

"Well, it's the first time I've found you quite so easily convinced, I must say." Mr. Bradley regarded Harry closely.

Harry looked up with an effort at whimsicality.

"To tell the truth, Mr. Bradley, I'm afraid I wasn't paying very close attention. I'm—I'm a bit bothered to-day."

"Oh!" said Mr. Bradley, shortly, half-humorously.

Harry regarded Mr. Bradley with reciprocal keenness; and imagined his secret read. This urged him to swiftness. But how should swiftness be achieved with one that eluded him? He laughed at defeat with her nigh handy to win. But equally victory mocked him while she shrouded herself with distance.

As he gazed at the glowing coals unhappily, seeking to achieve a thought that eluded him in the ambush of uncertainty, he heard the door, and, turning quickly, half hoping to discover Rose, he saw Jim come in with opened book in his hand. Seeing him, Jim had shrunk back; and stood in the half-opened door regarding him with contemplative eyes.

A quick hope hung out to Harry, and he exclaimed—

"Hullo, Jim!"

The boy came forward slowly with outstretched hand, still regarding him with serious contemplation.

"I came to ask grandpa the meaning of a word," he explained slowly, never moving his eyes off Harry's face.

"Well, you've got a better man here than I, Jimmy," laughed Mr. Bradley.

"What is it, old chap?" said Harry, holding out his hand. Though he had initially decided on playing for a higher game than mental elucidation for Jim Foggetty, something preternaturally grave and yet intensely loveable about the lad won to Harry's affection, and he forgot the mother in her son.

"Iconoclast," said Jim, stumbling over the word, and giving it a strange quantity indeed.

"Let's see the book," said Harry, drawing out of Jim's hand a calf-bound volume of history that Mr. Bradley had bought on his retirement from business even as he might have bought a china vase, for distinctive decoration, and which Jim was now putting to its first perusal.

As he drew the book away from Jim, Jim himself drew nearer to Harry. Whereupon Harry drew up to one side of the capacious chair he had sought to occupy, saying—

"Plenty of room for two young men, Jim. Come along, and we'll talk about it. You see, this man's talking about iconoclasts of one kind, and I rather want to have a spout about iconoclasts of another kind. He means image-breakers; but there's another kind of iconoclast you'll come across soon enough that wants to break up things other people think beautiful and find useful just because he doesn't like them. I'll

forgive the first, but we won't have the other. Comfortable?"

"Yes," murmured Jim, sinking mystification in affection.

Mr. Bradley regarded the two with an expanding smile. He continued so to regard them, and his thoughts were strange and tender. It was well for Harry that Mr. Bradley's discovery of his secret was so soon to be followed by this scene. For Mr. Bradley shrank from losing Rose; but he shrank over and above all from permitting a possible spurning of Rose to come on her. A Denzil, even Harry Denzil, would not have found it possible to overlook Rose's calamity, even though infatuation so far overwhelmed him as to put a light regard on her lowly origin, and the humble home that had found her a shelter. But this scene touched him.

He rang for Alice. When this antique dame appeared he said—

"Bring in some wine and biscuits, will you, Alice? And tell Rose to come in too, I want her."

When Rose appeared he said—

"Ah, Rose, my dear! Come in and sit down and talk. Those two young men have paired off, you see, and I've got no company."

Something caught at Rose's heart as she surveyed the spectacle. It won to her with a silver tongue. No one had achieved victory over Jim so readily or so completely. Harry knew she had entered, but took no notice of her.

"Look pretty, don't they, Rose?" said Mr. Bradley softly to her.

Rose shunned the word "pretty," but agreed with the sentiment. Moreover, it was strange; it was difficult to explain; it was even hard to own to; but she felt

more than a little wounded that Harry should take no notice of her, giving up his exclusive attention to Jim. Mr. Bradley was father to her, as she had never had a father; and she enjoyed to converse with him. But it was not easy, nor so desirable, when the third person who lately had made their triangular conversations like air taken on snowy regions, pure and invigorating to the jaded thought, was occupied otherwise, and gave them only neglect. She knew the state of her emotions. The past had made it well-nigh impossible for her to neglect self-knowledge. She had determined to resist herself lest a worse calamity should befall her. But in nursing injury she fell to weakness, even as Harry's interest in, and affection for, Jim fanned her mother's heart to flame of new regard for him who had occasioned it. She heard it not; but there was a clatter about her, betokening the falling of some of the pieces of armour with which she had lately encased herself.

When Harry rose to go she was tenderer to him, tenderer even because of a lurking reproach. He was gaiety itself. No reproaches came from him now.

Jim accompanied him to the hall: Mr. Bradley did not. Therefore he held her hand rather longer than politeness demanded as necessary, and even caressed it gently, as he said—

"I shall be round on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. I shall have a book which I should like this young man to read——"

"Oh, don't bother about that, Mr. Denzil," she broke in.

"I don't intend to," he said gently. "I only do it because I should like to very much. I hope I won't fail to see you then."

"I expect I shall be in." Her eyes fell before his.

"I expect so, too. But that wasn't what I said."  
He was smiling at her. She could not but smile back.

"Shall I see you then?" he asked again.

"I expect so," she replied.

"I take that for promise." He forebore pressing her further. "Good-bye, Jim. We'll have many a jaw yet, you and I."

He was gone. Rose turned in, softened, but more perplexed. She went to her room, and the situation won tears from her.

## VIII

THE following morning after breakfast, as Harry endeavoured helplessly to busy himself in the principles of statutory equity—an elusive faun that would defy the optimist of stoutest head—Cicely burst in on him.

"Busy, old boy?" she exclaimed.

"Bit, yes. Want anything?"

"Only to have a chat."

"Fire ahead." Harry thrust a neat tape into his book to mark its place, and laid it on the table. He inclined his attention to Cicely.

She sat on the edge of the table, swinging one leg restlessly. She seemed to have some difficulty in getting under way with what she had to say. Some diffidence, moreover.

"Get on with it," said he.

"I say, it was funny the way you went round to the Bradleys that day, and met father there."

"Funny?"

"Well, strange."

"I suppose it was."

"What did you think of Mr. Bradley?"

"Think of'm?"

"Yes. I wish you wouldn't echo me."

"Oh, a most extraordinary man."

"So I've heard."

"Oh! what is it you've heard?"

"He has risen, hasn't he?" She gave peculiar value to "risen."

"Ah, yes; used to be quite a little beggar once. Couldn't talk; couldn't walk. But he's quite a big chap now. Five foot nine. Wonderful."

"That wasn't what I meant. You know very well what I meant. Why can't you talk sensibly?"

"If your ladyship would only explain!"

"You always go on like that when I talk to you. I want to talk seriously, can't you see?"

"Oh!" He folded his hands over his abdomen, and looked smug.

She looked down at him, then laughed. Going over to him, and shaking him by the shoulder, she said—

"You're a most annoying man, Harry. You always go on in that silly way when I want to talk to you."

"But I'm listening; I'm all ears."

"But how can I talk seriously to you when you look like that?"

"I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure. But I can't help my looks, madam. My father's part responsible for that."

"You're silly." She pouted a bit. She had cause, for she was being ridden off saying what she came to say; and she knew it. He, too, knew it. She was fairly transparent to him.

"I say, Cicely," he exclaimed.

"Well?"

"You know you're very beautiful."

"Don't be a fool."

"There you are, you see! That's what you get for trying to be polite, even at the cost of truth."

"What!"

"Oh, no, no, no! I didn't mean that, of course. Your charms are superlative. That blue eye of yours!" He rose and inspected her.

"I wonder when you'll learn to be sensible," she said, returning him stare for stare.

"Ah, I wonder!"

"I came in here to talk sensibly."

"I say!"

"Well!"

"What do you think of our father?"

"That's got nothing to do with it."

"I'm glad to hear you say so. I thought it had."

He quizzed her closely; and she braved him out.

"Rum old devil, isn't he?"

"Harry!"

"I mean—er—queer old fish!"

"I know what you mean."

"What do I mean?"

"You mean, I've been talking to him. Because if so——"

"I didn't mean anything of the kind."

"What did you mean?"

"I meant he'd been talking to you." He looked still closer at her.

"Well, then, he has. And I think he's quite right."

"So do I.—What! Are you going?"

"I am."

"He's not in the consulting-room now, you know!"

"What do you mean?"



"I mean, I heard the motor go off a few minutes back."

"Oh, I wasn't going to father." Her nose was in the air loftily, and her tones stiff with hauteur.

He sat back in the chair with his book. But just as the door was about to close, he called out—

"Cicely!"

She reappeared, with interrogation printed on her face.

"Would you like me to trot you out this afternoon?"

"Sir!"

"Trot you out, I said."

"If you'd like to be honoured with my company, I'll let you."

"Same thing."

"On the contrary, quite a different thing."

"Well? What do you say?"

"I'll let you know at lunch. But I think it's very likely I'll let you come with me."

She had gone. His book lay listless on his knees. Statutory equity seemed more unreal than ever; a phantasm thrice phantasmal. For it was evident to him that his father was working. And he did not trust his father. He expected no honour in a war waged with him; for Dr. Denzil held that honour to one's own children was an indignity. What his father was doing, or would do, he knew not. He heard Bobby go out of the front door, slamming it after him, and envied his freedom from home for so long a time during the year. Circumstance from every side was pressing; and he determined to leap to his coveted crag, and stand and face them all.

## IX

THE weather had been bitterly frosty. What of snow had fallen had held the soil in purity and soft refulgence. Even the sun had thrown out frosty rays, augmenting rather than reducing the keen air that bit the cheek. Wiseacres had prognosticated a "real Christmas," and the populace had clung to the hope that even such a Christmas as had blessed their forefathers, if tradition was anyway to be relied on for accuracy, was to bless them that year. Each and all exulted in the thought, and for some deep and mysterious reason unknown, it had undoubtedly augmented trade. All were pleased; they who spent no less than they who received: which is a sufficiently happy state in human affairs to merit the celebration of an angelic choir to itself.

But the peace and good-will was rudely snapped. The multitudes awoke on Christmas Eve to find rain in possession of the scene. A sudden warmth came with it, and mists, moreover. With ironic swiftness the "real old-fashioned Christmas" had vanished into air, into thin air; and anathemas took its field.

Through such an unhappy town Harry took his way. His heart beat high. He had won the reputation occasionally for aplomb. He himself wondered at it, for nervousness bound him in its merciless toils at every crucial moment. Mists rose before his eyes, a great smith beat mighty blows on his heart, and incapacity taunted him always when occasion rose most buxom with moment. That he should have won through them at all was sufficiently mysterious to him. That he should win praise in them seemed like the voice of mockery.

Such nervousness bound him as he made his way through the streets. It grappled with him, seeking to hurl him into the abysses of cowardice as he knocked at the house and asked, not this time for Mr. Bradley, but directly for Rose.

"Mrs. Foggetty is in the dining-room, sir, if you'll step in," said Alice.

Harry did step in, and quickly, though with beating heart, lest Rose should evade him.

He met her coming across the room as though to go out. Little he knew what cogitations had rocked her these past few days! Little he knew how an old wound had been opened in her, wasting her strength, harrowing her mind, making her fear him as she had never known fear before, making her determine never to see him again, never even to let Jim see him again, drenching her pillows with tears, and her nights even more with anxiety. He only knew she was alone in the room. She had tried to evade him, but he frustrated her.

"I'll go and bring father," she murmured, seeking to pass him.

"Don't go," he said, in very desperation striking at this opportunity.

She drew away from him.

"I brought this book for Jim. I wish it as a Christmas present. Will you—will you give it to him tomorrow morning from me?" He held it out in its wrappages.

"Oh, you shouldn't have done that." She eyed it in her hand, and was near tears. Little he knew, thought she, the history that had occasioned Jim, and determined to fend the moment he sought that would make the story necessary.

"Why not?" he asked. "It was a great pleasure

to me. I like Jim very much, apart from the fact that he is your child."

The blood took her cheek, and beat quickly in her veins at the remark. She was silent before him. Nervousness, the fell smith, beat on its anvil as he surveyed her, in him and her.

"I brought this, too, for yourself." He drew a small parcel from his pocket, and handed it to her.

"For me?" Her eyes lifted to his. He saw something in their depths that quieted him, assured him.

She held the packet hesitatingly.

His hand plucked nervously at the lappel of his coat as he spoke—

"Would you open it?"

She did so, slowly; with curiously reluctant fingers. A brooch surveyed her. Over the years came the memory of another brooch, stinging her soul. Tears stained her cheek. She did not thank him; but surveyed the filigree emblem of his regard through a swaying mist. A cataract sounded in her ears.

He surveyed her; and the world was blotted for him. They stood so, alone in infinite space.

"Rose!" he said, advancing toward her.

"Oh, no! don't say that!" Tears, mists, were gone; and she fended the coming doom.

"Don't say what?"

"What you're going to say."

They stood facing each other, breathing greatly.

"Rose,—I want—one day—to make you my wife."

"Oh, no, no, no!" Her eye had terror in it. "You don't know me; you don't know anything."

"I do know I love you, Rose." He had her by her hand.

She looked up at him agitatedly. His face was wrought with fear of losing her.

"Please don't, Mr. Denzil. I'll ask father to speak with you."

His face expressed infinite torture. He passed his hand over his face; and the gesture reached to the uttermost of her pity. It showed her how truly he had won her.

"I'm so sorry, oh, I am, really, believe me! I wouldn't cause you any pain for all the world." She took his hand as she spoke. "But you don't know anything of me. Will you let me ask father to speak to you?"

"Can I see you after?"

"If you wish it, yes!"

His gesture suggested compliance, and she went. He sat in the great chair that he usually occupied, and buried his face in his hands. The whole thing perplexed him, and taunted him. He grappled with something intangible, and he knew not what it was. His whole soul was sunk in the lethargy of relaxed effort.

He sat so as Mr. Bradley came into the room.

"Ah, Mr. Denzil!" began he somewhat awkwardly.

Harry spoke out the urgent theme that moved in him.

"Mr. Bradley, what is it?"

"Rose has asked me to speak to you. Of course—you see—perhaps I should have spoken before, but in a certain sense, of course, I couldn't, you see!" This was somewhat bewildering to poor Harry. Far from creating light in his darkness, it the more intensified his gloom by spinning intricacy of words before the eye of his perplexity. Mr. Bradley, however, trod in marshy soil; and was no little uncomfortable by reason of his way.

"What is it? I told her I loved her. Isn't that

sufficient? I mean it, nothing else matters to me."

"Rose asked me to speak to you. Poor child, she is very distressed. Of course, it's none of her fault: far from it! But she's naturally unhappy about it."

He looked at Harry, who returned his glance with a face full of trouble, twisted with pain and emotion. He knew not what to say, nor how to phrase it. He cleared his throat, however, and began again—

"It's very uncomfortable for me. Of course, it's my duty." He stood manfully to it: his tone expressed determination.

"I beg of you——" began Harry in intense supplication. But a quick flutter of skirts fell on his ears; and, turning, he saw Rose standing in the doorway. Mr. Bradley turned and saw her too. She spoke, firmly, resolutely, seeking to quell the emotion that quivered in her voice—

"Father, let me, will you? I ought to."

"But, my child——"

"Please!" She looked into his face, and there was entreaty in her voice that begged him not to increase her burden.

He turned and looked upon the two, and left.

"Rose," said Harry, rejoiced to have her to speak to, "I love you. That's all that matters, if—if you love me." He spoke the latter words softly.

She looked at him tensely, then broke her word.

"I'm not married."

He regarded her.

"I've never been married."

Still he regarded her.

"Jim's illegitimate. Father took me in, destitute."

He saw her through a mist. Persistent vapours waved before his eyes, which he as persistently waved aside. Let him not be despised that it meant much to

him, this that he heard. He was no hero, he was no superior person; he was a man, like most, fashioned in unthinking convention, and some of the glory had fallen from her. She did not float through refulgent heavens now; she sat before him on a prosaic chair, and he needed adjusting to these new conditions. Slowly he saw that the self that needed adjusting was the same, nevertheless.

"I love you, Rose. That's all that matters." With the word the situation became already clearer to him.

He went firmly over, and pressed a kiss on her unresisting lips. There was no wild ecstasy in this their first kiss, but in its firm pressure a deep joy moved with wide pinions through their souls. What vast impending troubles lay beyond, he knew not, but took this first step, firmly, unhesitatingly. Nor, in the teeth of sentimentalist opinion, was it the less lovely because there was in it the firm prompting of duty.

Nevertheless, she was thrilled. His firm unhesitation made him seem to her manly beyond comparison. Her own timidity made it seem to her the nobler, while her past experience came back on her to exalt the deed beyond its due. His conquest of her was the completer for it. Though clamorous voices had earlier bade her erect no more heroes in her heart, her trust now went out to him so that she had room for none other in her thoughts but him.

But the old voices crept back on her. Liberating herself from his binding arms, she stood free, regarding him.

"Harry!" she said.

"Rose," he burst out, "you love me. That's all I care about now."

"I ought to have told you all before I let you kiss me."

"No, no, our kiss ought to have come first." He spoke his thought. Even now he feared himself, and was glad that the kiss stood for pledge to him.

"But I must tell you. I can't go on till you know everything."

He drew her to him, but she resisted him. Then he took her gently to a chair, and sat opposite her with the mien of one determined to hear something that mattered no whit either way. Yet the truth was that his heart sickened in him as he framed his mind to hear what meant so much to him. He forgot how much it meant to her.

"Never mind about it now, dear," said he. "I know the main fact, and it makes no difference to me. Let us leave the details for another time."

But she would not. Firmly she faced her own mind's doubt, braved it, determined to best it. Nevertheless, it was no plain ungarnished tale she told. Rather by hints, half-lights, and aloof suggestions, she spun the tender fabric before him. She did not tell him, she made him see it. She skirted the rocks, and made him see their fashion by her circuit, their monstrous aspect by her fear of them. It all lived again actively in her imagination, and imagination threw a glamour over the faint words she used, making them to glow with the colour of large meaning to his mind. So he learnt the tale, and learning it thus his sympathy was touched the more. Her manner forbade caresses in the telling of it, and his soul yearned with infinite tenderness over her as he learnt her grief. Pity came to give love a new meaning. He shone as her champion as he heard the tale, and he desired nothing more than that parental wrath should put him to the test of true love.

"My poor Rose," he said, when all the tale was told.



"You know you make me think no sacrifice too great on my part after this. I pray I may win you a deeper meaning in life, particularly after your terrible experience. I pray it may be so." Then, as new winds awoke in his mind, he cried out, "I hope I may meet that brute one of these days. I'll thrash him within an inch of his life."

## X

IT was Christmas Eve. There were tragic gleams in that fact as Harry assisted in the annual decoration of the home. He had wished to get quietly away to think over the new relation of his life, and to discover his immediate course of action. But Cicely had captured him, and his youthful brother had brought in a doughty comrade with a view to hilarity. He had, perforce, submitted.

No mood was his for just such hilarity. A lofty joy stirred in him, truly enough, but it was strangely tempered with perplexity, and, to be frank, a distaste that he failed to account for. Serenity of thought was impossible; but reflection he yearned for. But reflection was strewn to the wind by Bobby's raucous mirth. This last sent Cicely into high merriment, which irritated him, and jarred. Nevertheless, he threw himself into it with some success.

When alone, however, the brave words he had spoken to his beloved took an ironic hue before him. Not that he shrunk; not that he loved her less. Recognition of circumstances is only incompatible with steadfast emotion to the sentimentalist. Sentiment may not thrive in perplexity. It is the proper business of emotion to combat it. And perplexity faced Harry

Denzil. Not only a perplexity without, which was for a later hour to evolve, but a deeper perplexity within. He could not win it to take shape. The more he struggled the more it eluded him. He sought refuge in sleep.

The following morning, the initial festivities over, he went to refresh his inspiration. Rose met him expectantly. Her manner was diffident, and the shades of question were on her face. He saw it, however, and, quickly guessing the cause, folded her in reassuring arms. She clung to him to calm her own querulous misgiving. Her face looked up with question on it.

"Dearest, I love you very dearly."

"Harry," she whispered, and a new joy fluttered in her voice.

"And you?"

"I tried to avoid you."

"Why?"

She looked her reply.

"I knew." He read her answer. "I shall try, Rose, my dear, to recreate the world for you. I hope I may. I shall not fail for lack of effort."

She was not one in whom speech failed if occasion demanded, but now she but nestled closer to him, to bid cease the doubts that still moved slowly in her. He framed the words to reassure her, reassuring himself, too, thereby, and moved on from deeper to deeper protestations—landmarks of faith to her, pledges of memory to him.

Mr. Bradley spoke with him later, and passed him for a noble soul in his ready judgment. He asked what Dr. Denzil had said.

"I haven't mentioned it to him yet," said Harry.

"I scarcely know what to do about that. Of course

I shall have to tell him; but I think I'll let Christmas pass over first."

"That's for you to decide, my lad," said Mr. Bradley, in reliance on him. He was not one to dictate courses of action. "It seems to me right, though, that he should know from you quickly."

"Yes," said Harry doubtfully, misgiving raising its head at the uncomfortable prospect.

"He'll be annoyed, I think. An excellent man, your father, in a professional capacity; but not one of very deep sympathy, I think."

"I don't love him," burst out Harry.

"Don't you?" Mr. Bradley's tone implied that he was scarcely so surprised, but thought, nevertheless, rebuke was demanded.

"Well, perhaps I oughtn't to say that," Harry interposed. "Still, it's true," he went on. "He has never seemed to want it. You can't very well love a man that doesn't really want you to, can you?"

"No, perhaps not!" Doubt was still in Mr. Bradley's voice, though understanding was in his heart.

They avoided further mention of the doctor, though he imposed memory of himself on them all.

## XI

HONESTLY Harry sought occasion to make his father aware of the new factor in their relationship. But the courage failed in him. He had even made his way to the consulting-room, where his father spent most of his time, purposing to make an end of the matter, but at the door-mat courage had given way. His heart's sledge-hammer awed him.

But his father came forward to lend him ready assistance.

They were sitting smoking silently together after dinner, two days after Boxing Day. It was their habit to make this show of companionship. The deepest fellowship is sometimes silence. But since opposites have most curious affinities of conduct, the deepest discomfort is also silence. So it was with him. At last Dr. Denzil removed his cigar from his mouth with a supreme gesture, and said—

"I thought, Harry, some time ago I told you it was my wish that you should not visit the Bradleys."

"Yes," said Harry, thinking "Now it's coming." He drew more intensely on his cigarette.

"And yet, I understand, you have since then been seen frequently at the house."

"What makes you think that, father?" He did not think of denying it; but neither did he propose surrendering any point without a contest.

"Never mind what makes me think it! I'm telling you now that I have very good reason to believe it. Is it so?"

"Yes."

"Do you, then, propose to defy me?"

Harry was without answer. He was mentally seeking a deft method of advancing the theme of all themes to him.

"I'm waiting for an answer, Harry." Dr. Denzil stared severely at his son, and Harry endeavoured to give him glance for glance as he made reply—

"I propose marrying Rose Foggetty as soon as I can, father." He spoke steadily, and avoided appellations for Rose.

Dr. Denzil started, and his face flushed. For awhile he said nothing. When he spoke it was coldly.

"Don't be a fool, Harry!"

This was a difficult interjection to get past. Unexpected, moreover. Harry had looked for the volcano's crust to split, and the heavens to have glowered red fury. Instead of which, he was brushed aside contemptuously. Some kind of reply was incumbent on him. The deftest and coolest would have found it difficult to frame a wise reply in the circumstances. Harry was therefore not much to be blamed if, in his nervousness and perplexity, his reply took a tone that sounded priggish.

"I love her, father, and she loves me. Of course, that's the great thing for us. I have thought over it carefully. I may not be able to afford to marry her yet, or for some time—although naturally it will be an incentive for me to work."

"I suppose this fooling's been going forward for a long time, and you've been hoodwinking me."

Harry winced.

"No, only a few days. I intended to have told you earlier, but I hadn't an opportunity."

"You know her history?"

"I know everything. She told me."

Dr. Denzil still regarded his son, and there was a deep, unquenchable hostility in his gaze.

"Of course it's a piece of nonsense from first to last. But you'll get over it." He rose, and knocked his ash into the grate. He turned to go. "But remember! my word is, no visitings at the Bradleys. That's final."

"But father!——" began Harry.

Dr. Denzil turned at the door.

"I don't want any bandying of words about your silly infatuations. If I hear any more of your visits to the Bradleys, or learn that you have been seeing

this—girl, there'll be a very serious business between us. Understand that!"

"Father, I'm pledged in honour, and more——" so Harry began, but his father was gone.

This was rather a different outcome to what Harry had expected. He had looked for a contest, and a contest implies equals. Instead of which he was simply brushed aside, which put him on a plane ignominiously below his opponent. He had desired a contest, too, for other and more potent reasons. For he desired firm earth to tread on. He wished to know how the future fared for him. He knew vaguely that his plight with Rose meant disruption with his father, and therefore violation of all plans regarding a forensic career. But more than this he had not yet faced. What other he should do than read for the Bar, he knew not. His way of life had cut him aloof from those avenues where keen discussion of modes of existence went forward. And he had thought that this darkness in his mind would have been illuminated by the inevitable conflict with his father, as though from the shock of two opponents in their orbits a sudden and new luminary would have flashed forth, if only a variable or temporary luminary, over the deeps of gloom, raying aloft by way of guide and gleam to him. Instead of which the present perplexity transcended his earlier gloom.

He sat for a long while thinking the position over. The only thing that remained to him to do was, obviously, to produce a cataclysm. The present indecision was intolerable.

He went out and strode through the mirk and gloom of a misty night, to give ease to his troublous mind. He knew his father had heard him go, for the dispensary lay near the front door; he hoped that person

would arrive at the conclusion that he had issued forth on a visit to the Bradleys.

Great is the value of exercise! It clears the blood and invigorates the mind. With its healthful showers through the brain it clears phantasms and chases forth the chimera of anxiety. It does not solve perplexity; it dismisses it. It cannot unriddle riddles, but it banishes them. Thereby the mind recovers elasticity, and Hope is called down to aid in the conflict.

So it was with Harry. He strode briskly on and on, till the very theme of his perplexity was swept magnificently out of his thought. The body called in the mind to participate in the supreme rhythm of its joy. And the mind called back gladly. Let that man be eyed askance that mingles the praise of swift walking with the praise of perplexed thought. Let him be known for pot-boiling journalist, in fearful need of material, or for posturing humbug that knows neither one nor other of the things he praises. As Harry's speed increased so did his joy of motion wing higher flights. And as joy mounted in his brain so difficulty and gloom vanished. It was for a test of his love that Rose shone before his eye as rare and healthful, pure and joyous, all the time, only the perplexities surrounding her falling aside like corrupted and moth-eaten cloths, leaving her exhaling a radiance of delight before him. No slight test this! It said she had touched emotion in him, the healthiest, wisest and noblest of all human things, to which reason is but a pale spectre. It showed, too, that she had not spoken to mere sentiment, which is the goddess emotion bound or afraid of herself.

It was so when he returned. His father and all were forgotten. But she was a sweet inspiration in his thought. He leapt up the stairs in healthy bounds

and made straightway for his room. There the browsing spirit seized him, and he turned over one or two of his books in happy inconsequence, when a knock fell on his door. He hailed his visitor regardlessly, and Cicely entered.

She inquired as to the book he handled, referred to the jollities of the festive season just concluded, spoke of his walk, and then seemed to expatiate with some glowing enthusiasm as to his forensic career. She made mention of the intense satisfaction it would give her to know him as Prime Minister of the realm. It never occurred to her that had he aspired to this doubtful honour he might have aspired for reasons other than the lustre he would thereby shed on her. She even made touching reference to his charms as a young and desirable specimen of male humanity.

In all this an ulterior object was only too patent to him, and he determined to aid it by leaving her to do all the conversation. The freezing process succeeded. She sat on his bed, and, handling the brass knob that adorned the foot pedestal, regarded herself therein. Then she spoke—

“I’ve been talking to father.”

“I thought, perhaps, you had.” There was healthful humour in his voice.

“Of course, you’re not in earnest. I told him that. As I said to him, probably he annoyed you and you just went on to say things you didn’t mean.”

He handled the leaves of his book slowly as he replied to her.

“On the contrary, I’m very much in earnest. It seems to me now it’s the first time in my life I’ve been in earnest. It may not be the last, but I don’t mean to let this opportunity go in the hope of another turning up.”



"Father's frightfully upset about it." Cicely regarded him in a manner that spoke as though she did not desire to interfere; and this touched him more than anything else.

"Is he? I'll give him his due and say he didn't seem much upset when I spoke to him earlier."

"You know father's very strange sometimes. He doesn't like being upset. It's only his way. He really is very upset; I've never known him so distressed."

"I must say I agree with you with regard to the strangeness. And so he commissioned you to talk to me."

"Oh, no! not that! He was talking to me about it, and said that I might have a little influence over you, as he'd never appeared to have any. That's all."

"I wished to discuss it thoroughly with him, but he wouldn't let me. He just cleared out. I rather imagine he thinks being a father is the next thing to god-head."

There was silence between them for awhile. She was less concerned with defending their paternal relative than with obviating the possibility of any disturbance that might militate adversely against her subsequent joy of life. So she let the attack pass.

"Well, I can understand him in one way, you know. The whole thing's so absolutely stupid."

"I beg your pardon." There was a slight humour in his tone, for he heard in this the echo of another voice speaking down the wind.

"Oh, yes; I know, old boy, you're very chivalrous and all that kind of thing. But it's so silly. Who is she, for one thing? If she were that man Bradley's daughter it might help things—though, goodness knows, it would be bad enough, even then. But she's

not. We don't know who she is. Father hints things; but doesn't say. Harry, she's a nobody."

She spoke this last as the concluding climax in a maze of perplexity. It came as a relief to Harry that his father had had sufficient of decency to forbear publishing Rose's misfortune.

"That's a strange way to speak of your prospective sister-in-law, it seems to me. It's scarcely delicate."

The mention of Rose in this near relation startled Cicely. It sobered her, too. She was silent for a long time. When at last she spoke it was with considerable awe.

"But whatever are you going to do?"

"I've pledged my troth, I've given my love; that's the beginning and end of all things, even if it means my clearing out of here." Harry spoke coldly, decisively.

"Clearing out of here?" Cicely spoke with horror and amazement. "But, my dear boy, whatever would you do?"

"That's a thing I haven't even thought of yet. Sufficient unto the day is the trouble thereof. It's as much as we can do usually to get one thing settled at a time. I'm glad to say my first is clear in my mind: the rest must follow in due course."

Cicely had never seen her brother so decisive as this. It irritated and annoyed her self-will.

"I didn't think you were a fool, Harry. Really, I thought better things of you." She rose from the bed, and made a gesture of impatience, as she spoke.

"It's not the least portion of my lament to have lost your esteem, I must say." Mockery rippled in his tone. "It's part of my frightful egotism, I know, but I'd rather lose even your esteem than my own self-esteem."

"Then I suppose you've quite made up your mind," said Cicely, in high delivery of scorn.

"Quite! I shall, of course, visit there in the ordinary course. And I shall sponge on my father as long as he will let me." The tactician in Harry was playing for an ejection as a considerable strengthening of the prejudices in his favour. "You can tell him that," he added.

"Good-night!" Her kiss was icy.

"Good-night." He added raillery to it.

## XII

THE following morning at breakfast it was obvious to Harry that his previous night's conversation had already been recounted to his father. How he knew it he could not say; but it was to him set deep in certainty. He himself took the air of a man injured; but his father in air and speech seemed to have no recollection of any disturbance of the family peace, Cicely was unduly silent, but Bobby made up for it by considerable fervour of joy.

He remained in all the morning, reading, not dry-as-dust law-books, but a certain author whose style, like the swaying of lawless seas, and whose passion for diatribe, had for some time repelled him, but whom he had now come to read with something nearer personal affection than most authors stirred in him: whose style had come to wear to him the very shape of a rugged but manly and lovable soul, and whose very diatribe was to him the tragedy of a great heart illicitly kept out of his own for so long a time by purse-proud inferior minds. To the *Centre of Indifference* he turned, and even forgot that his main reason for

staying in was that his father should seek an occasion to come to issue with him.

But he did not do so. And lunch, too, passed, even as breakfast had done, seemingly with no more of constraint than the household usually knew.

Then he set out for Rose. There was something of coolness and deliberation in him as he went. Passion had receded from its full and moving waters. He stood on less romantic heights, but he stood not less surely to his love.

Rose met him, as usual, eagerly, and with large strength of emotion. The news he bore her filled her, however, with perturbation. For she feared Dr. Denzil. He had not only slighted her, scorned her, neglected her; these things aroused only opposition in her mind, but his manner was that of one who quailed not to do the brutal should occasion require it. She knew, therefore, that he would bring his whole artillery to bear on Harry.

A strange thing awoke in her. Her past trouble had brought its deep crises in her mind, and in winning her way through she had achieved a certain steel-like vigour of mind, that moved in all her intensity of emotion, and was next neighbour to independence. Before she had met Harry she had been determined to stand free of all henceforward: to own fealty to none, to bow the knee to none. Though she could not see this, it was partly this that caused her to endeavour to frustrate Harry's wooing, that made her flee him. She had purposed filling her lot in life as an independent unit. She had won her way through calamity with vigour, and the vigour that had been upcalled, with which to shatter the manacles that bound her soul, remained with her. It gave to her original and native power and purity of emotion a certain strength,

that was lovely in so far as it was fearless and self-reliant, but that was unlovely in so far as it was exacting and impatient.

Strength is often impatient, but it is next neighbour to weakness when it is so.

All this now rose up in her, and Harry, not understanding it in her, was perplexed. He, it seemed, was being called to the sacrifice of all. In responding to the call he would thus raise himself above her, and this cut at their equality. For the first time this came severely to the front in her. Had he stumbled at the call, the lament of perpetual faithlessness would have been awakened in her. In standing firmly to it, he gave her second rank. Her soul rebelled: for years she had nurtured herself on the thought that never would she brook inequality. She had relied on another once; given up guidance once: never again!

Did he desire his freedom? Fearfully she asked it. She did not wish to put a heavy burden on him. Why should he be called to sacrifice on her account? He mocked at the word sacrifice. The sacrifice was hers in being called to take the burden of such as he.

"Harry, if you would wish for liberty, say so, dearie!" she said eventually, still clinging to her point even when it drove daggers in her heart.

"Rose!" Surprise was in his voice. But he turned it to playful mockery. "Would it grieve you to be rid of me?" he asked.

"Oh, Harry!" Her lips sought his.

"I really believe that's what you mean," he said, taunting her.

Her eyes grew moist as she contemplated this possibility.

"Harry, I think it would break my heart." Her lips spoke the true business of her heart then.

"Then why all this talk of sacrifice? There's no sacrifice in love."

"I only wanted to be fair to you."

"Fair? You silly girl!"

And so they waved it away.

### XIII

DR. DENZIL was more anxious than he appeared to be. Perplexity was alive in him. The news communicated by the faithful Cicely, however, had made him aware that a new access of determination had woken in his son, and this spoke to the tactician in him. Several plans offered themselves to him. A brow-down, horns-forward attack on his son he dismissed as soon as it presented itself to him: firstly, as being undignified; secondly, as being unwise. Had Harry seemed distressed on Cicely's visit, he would have attempted it. A cavalry charge on a disordered field is certain victory; but a cavalry charge on a cool phalanx is to court disaster.

No, that was to be dismissed. At another moment it seemed to him that it would be well to bring an attack to bear upon Mr. Bradley. But this would mean recognition of the state of affairs, a piece of tactics as maladroit as undignified. Therefore this, too, went by the board.

Inaction is oftentimes the best action. So, Dr. Denzil neither said nor did anything. He began to trust to a cooling ardour in his son. Assuredly this cooling ardour would come, thought he. He judged his son to be ambitious (he, too, in a certain sense, was ambitious in his son), and surely Harry would come to see that to persist in so foolish an infatuation was to de-

vastate all the dreams of ambition! Moreover, he knew his son to be refined of emotion, and surely the thought of taking a sullied woman to wife would eventually revolt him! But, more than all, he relied on weakness in his son, and therein his skill as tactician fell all awry.

He knew that Harry still called at Mr. Bradley's house, he had even expected it. And therefore he was not surprised when he learnt from his source of information that the visits had become a matter of daily concern.

So he sat in the dusk of a January afternoon thinking. He was perplexed, for no abatement seemed to show itself in Harry's ardour. As he sat, he heard the front door close, and Harry hanging up his coat in the hall. He judged he had just come from seeing Rose. He hailed him.

The door of his room opened, and Harry appeared in the doorway with the query—

"Did you call me, father?" His manner was stiff, pugnacious almost.

"Yes, come in, Harry!" The doctor's tone was genial and expansive.

Harry came in, and, as his way was, went immediately over to the fireside, where he stood, awkwardly, toying with a new and resplendent pipe that the doctor had just sported himself, and which lay in its open case on the mantelpiece. Harry was awkward, the more so as his father said nothing. Dr. Denzil had a strange way of letting his eyes rove about his room in thoughtless vacancy. This he did now, and the silence became irksome. At length he spoke—

"Rather a nice pipe that, isn't it, Harry?"

"Yes, it is," said Harry, somewhat startled. He had not expected this. The tone, too, was genial. It

was perplexing. He began to be wary for gins and snares.

"It's a new method of treating meerschaum. It's a bit heavy in the mouth, but it's wonderful cool in the smoking. You can drop them, they say, and they don't break. I haven't tried, because they're rather expensive. I'd rather let somebody else try. Fine piece of amber, isn't it?"

"Very fine!" said Harry, examining a flawless curve of clear amber. It was an ideal shape for a pipe; and Harry handled it with some considerable admiration. With tenderness, almost.

"Take it, and try it," said his father, watching him sidelong. "If you like it, and recommend it, I'll get another for myself."

The pipe suddenly became a deadly thing in Harry's hand, and he regarded it with something of revulsion. It seemed like an embassy from an enemy's camp, tricking him to treachery. He laid it down on the mantelpiece as though its touch were clammy.

"Thanks!" he said shortly, after a period of silence. He said it almost mechanically.

"And what about your arrangements for going up to town? We ought to get those done soon now, don't you think?"

Harry was silent again for a time. He did not know how to fend this sudden amiability. Whether he should assume that his father was acting on the recognized basis of his avowed engagement with Rose, or whether he should put this forward as a prior matter for contention, he did not know. This was a turn in affairs he had not contemplated.

"I suppose I ought," he said, still endeavouring to solve his mental difficulty.

"Would you prefer to stay in an hotel at first, while



you're looking about for suitable rooms, and will you go up to London this week, or early next, for a few days, to search them out?"

"I haven't thought about it yet." Harry was still fighting with his difficulty, and his replies were vague, tentative.

"Don't you think you had better go into it at once, then?"

"Father!" broke out Harry, turning on his parent.

"Well?" Dr. Denzil's tone was bland, imperturbed, interrogative.

"Isn't there an earlier matter than that?"

"Is there? You know best."

"What about my engagement with Rose?" Harry's manner was that of the conscious pugilist, in wait for his opponent.

"Oh, I've forgotten all about that silly affair." Dr. Denzil's manner was still imperturbed. It swept the whole matter aside with calm benignity.

Harry fingered the pipe nervously, took it in both hands, dropped it back in the case, toyed with some papers agitatedly.

"I haven't," he said.

Dr. Denzil in turn was silent for awhile, then said—

"With your young high-flown ideas you don't see how preposterous the whole thing is. It's for that reason I make allowances for your folly, although it places me in a very awkward position. It would cover you with contumely."

"Contumely?" Harry shouted. "Why contumely?"

"Well, unfortunately our marriage laws make a woman declare herself as widow or spinster, the declaration having the force of an affidavit."

Harry started. The fact was disagreeable, and had not been thought of by him.

"You're taxing her with her misfortune," he said doggedly.

"My dear boy, misfortunes are crimes now-a-days."

Harry took his father's cynic reference. He did not think his reading had extended so far. The remark appealed, however, to his thought, and in endeavouring to reply to it in the field of reason he recovered considerably from his emotional perturbation. It steadied him, it braced him with the joy of thoughtful conflict.

"Before a proposition like that could be accepted one would have to define terms, wouldn't one? For instance, what are misfortunes? Or rather, what are not misfortunes?" He thought of an unsympathetic father, a wilful son, an overbearing disposition, as possible misfortunes, and an ironic smile came into his face as he saw the wide world embraced in the arms of criminality.

Dr. Denzil looked askance at his son, who was gazing at the glowing coals as he said this. He flushed angrily, and his eyes scowled at his son. But he was calm again before he spoke.

"Yes, well, I won't go into discussions. I only offer you the advice of one considerably older than yourself." He paused to see if Harry would speak, then went on: "It might make me angry to see the way you assume a greater knowledge than myself."

"I don't do that, father," protested Harry quietly.

"I don't see what else you do, overriding my distinct wishes as you do. Of course, you know very well that my wishes are based only on my desire for your welfare." Harry did not know this, but did not dispute it. "But you reject my counsel," went on Dr. Denzil, after a pause, "you overturn my wishes. And what for? For a bubble, a trifle. If you act sen-

sibly, as I think you will do, in a few years' time all this will seem foolish to you. It is, I suppose, the privilege of youth to be irresponsible, but it is my duty as your father to point out to you what the path of wisdom is." Harry still gazed at the crackling fire, and the voice went on. "At best, whatever girl you marry will bring you equal chance of happiness, and an erotic infatuation has got nothing to do with it. At worst, they'll bring you equal misery. In fact, the less of erotic mania you have the better, for if a crash comes you can hold yourselves the freer, while you do much to avert a catastrophe by avoiding too enforced an intimacy."

This dead logic of wisdom crushed and benumbed Harry. It lay like bonds of ice over his soul. It was with difficulty that he replied—

"Suppose that this is so, father, this does not militate against any one woman more than another, does it?"

"True, a man does better to avoid marriage, it's always a disillusion; the fine colours of romance never outlast the first days. But if a man does determine to marry, then my advice to him is to choose his partner so that after the disillusionment their relations can be equal and equable. What equal relations have you, for instance, with this girl? There is always the question of her unfortunate past before your eyes, doubly before your eyes in the person of her imbecile son."

"He's not an imbecile," broke out Harry hotly.

"Well, perhaps not, strictly speaking, but strange enough to be called so in the rough. But apart from that, your ways are not equal, your habits of life are not equal—she's only some farmer's daughter, or something of that kind—nor are you the same in any way. After your disillusionment, she'll take every upward aspiration of yours as a slight upon her. The

circles you'll want to move in will only strike uncomfortably on her, and that again will be a fresh cause of disturbance."

This tide of dead, because formulated, wisdom was crushing to Harry. He broke out in expostulation—

"Father, you're wanting to live your life again in me. All this is your experience of life; it may not be mine. And even if it is going to be mine, I want to prove it to be so for myself. I want to attend to advice, of course; but taking advice is, after all, only living life on hearsay. I want to live out my own experience."

"That's very fine as a high-flown sentiment. But high-flown sentiments belong to a mythical age, Harry. You think you're couching your lance at knights, but you'll find they're only windmills. This is the age of reason, cold reason, callous reason, if you will; but still, reason."

Futility is the knell of youth, and so of hope. Its clammy hands bind desire, and devastate endeavour; and reason is kin to futility. Harry had enough of strength to fall back on instinct.

"Reason can disprove truth, father, for reason can prove or disprove anything. It has no business with life, nor with anything quick, vital or permanent. You can disprove me now and I shall still have faith in life. If my own experience disproves me I hope I shall still have faith in it." His outburst was spoken passionately, and his father avoided his glance.

"Well, you think it over," said Dr. Denzil after a pause sufficiently lengthy to permit the glow of Harry's conviction to fade away. "On the one hand you've got all the glow of romance—as much of it as you want—and nothing else, for, of course, you yourself would not be so foolish as to expect me to support you

in a selfish action that brings discomfort and shame on Cicely and Bob and myself. On the other hand, you've got before you a useful career—which is sufficient romance for most people, and more permanent at that—you've got comfort, surety of income, and a purpose in life; with just a little temporary discomfort, a matter of a week or so."

So the blow had fallen! It was expected, but bruised him not the less for that. He cried out—

"But, father, I love her, and she loves me!"

"Do you? Well, now is your opportunity to prove it. If she loves you she will not wish you, she will refuse to let you, sacrifice yourself, your career and your family for a temporary whim on her part. If you love her, you will not sacrifice her happiness and peace of mind to your grossness of desire." Having wound up this ancient sophism with so fell a blow, he stole a glance at his son to see how it had fallen. Harry winced, started, and drew his shoulders square, but said nothing. His hot cheeks gave Dr. Denzil to know that his shot had gone home. So he continued with equal blandness, but with more softness of tone: "But I'm busy now. You think it over, my boy. Don't hurry. I'm behind you to help you all I can if you act sensibly. Otherwise, of course, you must put your convictions to the test yourself."

Harry went out of the room without a word, leaving the proffered pipe of peace behind him. Once gone, Dr. Denzil muttered to himself: "I don't know what the present generation's coming to. If I'd talked like that to my father I'd have been thrashed. But I think he'll come round now. He looked beaten." He rubbed his hands together, and turned to his book.

Harry was not at dinner, and nobody inquired where

he was. The following morning Dr. Denzil found a note on his desk that read thus—

“MY DEAR FATHER,

“I have made my decision, or rather, I am determined to adhere to my initial decision, whatever it may cost me. It seems strange to me that you, my father, should ask of me that I void my own word, my honour; but as you deride romantic considerations it will perhaps not seem strange to you. What I shall finally decide to do I cannot say. At the moment, I am sharing Mr. Bradley’s courteous hospitality, with some few of my books and clothes. I shall value the remainder, if you would not mind my sending for them. In this I recognize I can only appeal to your charity, as they were, of course, purchased with your money. I feel I am doing the only right thing: in so far as this brings you disturbance I can only be sorry. I thank you for what you have done in the past.

“With reference to our conversation of this afternoon, in spite of my inexperience I cannot help but feel that life is too large an affair for any one to dictate to any other as to its conduct.

“Please convey my love to Cicely and Bobby. I fear this will upset you. I am sorry.

“Your affectionate son,

“HARRY.”

#### XIV

DR. DENZIL read this through amazedly at first, then again with gathering fury. Crumpling it up, and hurling it in the fire, he sprang out into the hall with a call for Cicely.

"All right, father," coolly replied that young lady; "breakfast isn't ready yet. It won't be long."

"Oh, it's not that," irascibly broke the troubled man. "Where's Harry?"

"He's not down yet."

"Yes, but where is he? Has his bed been slept in?"

Cicely emerged at this with perturbed countenance.

"Why, what's the matter, father? Anything wrong?"

"Good heavens, girl, haven't I got troubles enough without your making them worse by asking silly questions? Go and see if Harry's bed has been slept in!"

Cicely departed without further parley, to leave him pacing up and down perturbedly, anxiety and wrath flying across his face in chase of one another. "Dash the boy," he muttered. "Well, as he makes his bed so he'll have to lie on it. I'll bar him the house. I'll bar him everything. I'll make him rue his conduct." Yet, though he said this, he fended the thought that Harry had really gone. He drove, or sought to drive, the idea from his mind. The impertinence of its intrusion brought forth the flames of his most irritable anger.

Nevertheless, Cicely came down to confirm the thought with the news that Harry's bed had indeed not been slept in, and that his room bore the tokens of sudden eviction. Her awed face chilled him.

"Where's Harry, father?" she asked.

"Gone to the Bradley's. Well, he'll rue it. I'll have no more to do with him. I wash my hands of him."

"Poor old Harry! But why——"

"Don't mention his name! I refuse to have his name mentioned in this house. Tell Bob that, and Mrs. Robinson."

It was a poor company that sat round at breakfast

that morning, a speechless, awkward circle. All went through the pretence of eating, but few evinced any prowess in that direction. None, in point of fact, save Bobby, who, for his part, did not propose to let a brother more or less interpose between him and the promptings of a healthy appetite. The others regarded him as an unhealthy abnormality, instead of knowing him for the wisest among them. Each was longing for the end of the dismal meal, in order to turn aside and think over the turn of affairs, but they all had to await his time as his rapacity worked its way through his usually portentous meal.

Dr. Denzil watched this last addition to his family with malignant eyes, but said no word, made no sarcastic comment. When at last Bobby began to fold up his serviette with the air of a man well satisfied, Dr. Denzil rose from the table with dignified energy and left the room.

Presently when Cicely sought him out she learnt that he had gone out to an urgent case.

"But I didn't hear the motor," said she to the offending Tim.

"No'm," replied that wee flunkey; "he said he wouldn't have the motor, didn't want it."

In truth, Dr. Denzil had gathered himself together and gone to find his son at the Bradley's. He had elected to walk, not only that he might cool his brain thereby, but rather so as to avoid the ostentation and publicity of the visit. This matter would be sure to cause no small buzz of gossip at a later hour, and he would not accelerate it; nor, indeed, would he give its subsequent flame fuel to wax high upon. He feared the pictorial figures of speech striking out the dramatic situation: he rushing up in a motor, a fearful struggle within, he and the son, the son fighting to



resist being borne away in the furious paternal arms to the steaming car without, thus to be hurried back within the doctor's battlements, with a raised drawbridge to defy the world. "Dash the boy," he muttered; "as it is, he'll make me talked of all over the place. He'll ruin my practice. And all to satisfy a temporary whim of his. He wants a good flogging, that's what he wants."

In this mood he arrived at Mr. Bradley's. With customary dignity he asked of the awed Alice for her master. Standing in the sitting-room he saw one or two books lying about, tokens of the fled Harry, and for the first time he was genuinely touched. When Mr. Bradley appeared it was, therefore, with some genuine dignity of emotion that he spoke to him.

"I asked for you, Mr. Bradley, as it was incumbent on me to do. But of course you guess the object of my visit. I wish to see my son."

"I am sorry to say, Dr. Denzil, he is out." Mr. Bradley spoke with a resolution that sought to muffle confusion.

"Out? Out?" The tragedy of futility was in Dr. Denzil's voice.

"I regret to say he is."

"He went out to avoid me, then?"

"I owe it to you, Dr. Denzil, to say that you're right. I told him he should see you," he went on hurriedly as the other was about to break in; "and he has promised me to do so. But he wishes to avoid you just for a few days. He's considerably distressed."

"He didn't strike me so." Dr. Denzil spoke coldly. "But still, have it so! Another matter is that I'm considerably surprised at you, Bradley, harbouring a

recalcitrant son of mine. Except when my professional duties bade me, I never remember having interfered in *your* domestic economy."

"Your son did me the honour to ask me for shelter. But that raises a much bigger question."

"Well?"

Mr. Bradley with some diffidence motioned his guest to be seated, and since he refused, stood himself opposite him. His manner was awkward, but firm. They made a strange contrast. Dr. Denzil was younger, more vigorous, and pompous with a dignity that seemed almost to have become natural, so inevitably and infallibly had it been worn throughout his days on all occasions. Mr. Bradley's hair and beard were white, giving him a benignant appearance. His manner was courteous, with that inevitable dash of deference clinging about him from his old shopkeeper days. But a certain kindliness won him respect. Over all which, he wore as a robe a curious something hard to define. It marked him as a man that would succeed in what he took in hand, could win through obstruction, heeded not obloquy if a goal wooed him; preserving him a native independence and fearlessness of thought, a pugnacity almost, a heat like stray sparks struck from a flint. It was this that had won him into the fray at election times, when he accomplished an unexpected power of diatribe. It was this that caused Dr. Denzil to respect him as an opponent as he faced him now.

"You must not think, Dr. Denzil," he said, "that when I saw this coming I wished it—I am speaking of this mutual affection. I warned my—er—ward, shall I say? against it. I objected to your son, not as a man, but as your son, as a match for her."

"You objected to my son as my son."

"Just so! I admire you as a man, Dr. Denzil, and I have unbounded confidence in you as a physician; but I scarcely think you're a lovable man, and I feared this trait might be dominant in your son."

Dr. Denzil drew himself up with wounded majesty.

"I am speaking frankly, you see!"

Dr. Denzil motioned him to proceed.

"You see, I value gentleness in men. If the monied classes were only gentle-men there would be no political problems of poverty and misery. Unfortunately they're largely brutes, which they disguise by calling the brutality manliness. But that's another question."

Dr. Denzil looked amazedly at this calm placid man that so courteously gave vent to such atrocious sentiments.

"I objected, too, to the class distinction. As a Radical, Dr. Denzil, you will quite see that class distinctions are as valid from one side as the other. I objected to my ward marrying a man whose education would give him a wholly false idea as to the real facts of existence, and whose instinct would spoil his chance of ever learning. I have come to think that there is a certain something in Harry that will overcome this. I hope there is, for I should be sorry for my Rose to marry a man of dwarfed intelligence."

"What has all this preposterous nonsense to do with the object of my visit? I have come to see my son." There were bars in Dr. Denzil's voice that spoke of anger pressing against them, like beasts eager for the field.

"You challenge my attitude. I am defining it. May I proceed?"

"I don't see what it has got to do with it. Go on, though!"

"I say I objected. I did not press it strongly, for

I thought I saw the same fight going on in Rose's mind as there was going on in mine, for I liked Harry; I have already told you, before all this, that I like your son. But when Rose gave herself to Harry I said nothing further. Liberty is with me more than an empty form of words. Whatever she chooses to do my attitude to her remains the same. You don't agree with this freedom?"

"It doesn't matter to you what I think."

"No, it does not. It matters to Harry. Still, there it is! I told him it was his duty to speak fully with you. I saw my judgment of you was not wrong, for I could see he was afraid of you, afraid to speak to you. Anyhow, to cut it short, he came round here yesterday and said he had left you. He said you had given him the final choice of his rejecting Rose or your rejecting him. He asked me for shelter, and I urged him to return to you. I don't know why I did; convention, I suppose. He turned away; and I asked him what he was going to do. He said he was going to the 'White Crown.' Then I took him in, as being more comfortable for him, less publicity for you, happier for Rose, and better all round. He treated me as a free agent, and I treated him as a free agent."

Mr. Bradley's manner irritated Dr. Denzil inexpressibly, but quelled him too. He kept fiercely erect; pulled at his moustache; bit his lip; but, nevertheless, heard him throughout. When Mr. Bradley had finished speaking, they stood regarding each other. Then he said—

"My son is out, you say."

"Yes."

"Is your—is Miss Foggetty in?"

"Yes; but you cannot see her."

"Oh! Why can't I see her?"

"For one thing it would distress her. For another thing, I know what you want to say to her."

"Indeed! And what may that be?"

"You would say that if she really loved your son she would give him up, and not wreck his chances of what you are pleased to call success."

"I must say I don't think much of her boasted affection for him."

"She boasts no affection. She merely says she loves him. But what he gives up is nothing to do with her; it is his business; what she gives up—for she, too, gives up something—is nothing to do with him. It is their business, each of them, to look to their own side, and not to disturb the other with their doubt. I have told her this repeatedly; I fear I have had occasion to tell her; I may add I have told her at the request of your son."

"May I ask what Miss Foggetty gives up?" He spoke incredulously.

"Her liberty."

Dr. Denzil's lips curled perceptibly; but Mr. Bradley said nothing. The silence between the two became a tension, to release which Dr. Denzil said with broad urbaneness—

"Really, Bradley, I think you must surely see that you are acting preposterously in keeping my own son from me. It is your very clear duty to send him back to me."

"I am really very sorry, Dr. Denzil. I hope I shall refuse hospitality to none, least of all to the man who wishes to be Rose's husband. I shall insist on his seeing you again, of course. But if he wishes to interpret your threat in the sense in which you gave it, that is his business, not mine."

Docility was obviously useless with a quiet deter-

mination of this kind. Dr. Denzil flew to anger.

"Your action's not only preposterous," he exclaimed, his figure seeming to tower over his opponent's thick-set pose; "it's heinous. Harry deserves a severe castigation; and as for you, you ought to be indictable before the law. It's to the shame of our sickly sentimentality these days that children should be given such liberty from proper parental control, to say nothing of the interference of strangers who see a catch for their shameless protégées."

Mr. Bradley's manner showed that a rude hand had been placed on the raw of his thought. His eyes flashed, he squared his shoulders indignantly, and made as though to speak, but Dr. Denzil by mastery of size and lung overcame him.

"I have nothing to do with my son's engagement in this quarter; nothing. I wasn't even consulted; and I have nothing to do with it. That's my attitude now, as it has been all along. I wish to see him; tell him that! Yet it must be in no other house than the one he was born in. I shall not discuss this question, for I refuse to recognize it."

He strode past Mr. Bradley as he spoke, waving him aside with a large gesture. Even determined Mr. Bradley, standing quietly foursquare to all his wrath, was overawed. He started to speak, but again his opponent quelled him.

"No! I don't wish to hear you speak. And remember! I reserve my liberty to make known the true state of affairs with regard to this girl."

He stood at the open door to see the effect of this on Mr. Bradley. The latter started; then said—

"If your instinct does not prompt you to be a gentleman no other compulsion will."

They faced each other a moment; then Dr. Denzil

was gone; be it said, in his honour, with no intention of fulfilling his threat.

Mr. Bradley turned to some rumpled papers, tidying them nervously. As he did so he murmured to himself: "Really, a most annoying man to talk to. And I particularly wanted to say something."

## XV

UPSTAIRS Rose heard Dr. Denzil go; and, looking out on him as he strode up the street, for the first time in her life she was somewhat won to him; pity won her. In its train it brought other sentiments. For the shock of battle was alive in her. A physical combat is the father of resolution; but mental conflict begets irresolution upon irresolution. When her quick, ardent soul had been put to its fires before, it had been simple of composition; moreover, the fires had been furious: and consequently, the cataclysm wrought in her had been fierce and tremendous. Now she was no longer simple but composite, and the testing fires only affected her through another; for which causes no great storm swept through her soul, but little eddying stormlets irritated it, trailing here and there, and never continuing sufficiently long to be located and coped with. Such an eddying stormlet was astir on some far unknown region of her soul by the pity her heart felt as she saw the doctor take his way across the street, and so out of sight.

When Harry came in she met him in the hall and helped him off with his coat. His face glowed with the cold and the exercise of his walk. His manner was that of one whom exercise had cleaned and purged.

"Had a good walk?" she asked, and her manner was constrained.

"Oh, fine!" he responded enthusiastically. "I suppose I've done the best part of fifteen miles, which would be at the rate of about five miles an hour. Pretty good going, what do you think?" He looked expectantly for warm commendation, but did not find it.

"Your father has been here," she said, and chilled him.

"Oh, has he?" he said. "Let's come in here and talk." He drew his arm about her, never heeding her quiet deadness of emotion, and led her into the sitting-room. Here Jim was reading. "Hullo, sonny!" he hailed him, and smiled to think of the peculiar fitness of the title he decked him with. Jim made way for him on his seat beside him, never now thinking of fleeing. Rose suggested that he should vacate the room; but Harry would not hear of it.

"He won't mind our wooing, Rose," he whispered, as he bent down to kiss her hair. "He'll get plenty of that later on," he added softly.

Rose made no reply. Her thoughts were perturbed. He saw this quickly and said to her—

"Why, what's the matter, dear? Has father's coming here upset you?" He bent over her; and Jim looked up with a curious look at them.

"No." Doubt swung to and fro in her voice.

"What is it, then, dear? There seems a cloud between us. What is it?" He was no less vexed than troubled as he spoke.

"Oh, it's all come so suddenly, Harry; I wish it had come more slowly."

"What do you mean, dear? Our love?" Anxiety was rising in him, and rung in his voice. The anx-



iety that he thought he had left behind out yonder, in the sunny, frosty fields, came back on him where least he expected it. It came from her.

"That; and everything. It all feels hardly real. Before it was all so quiet and easy." She clasped and unclasped her hand as she spoke, and her eyes grew moist.

"You don't mean to say you're sorry you met me?" Storm rung now, rising in its crescendo.

"Oh, no! Oh, no! But yet——" The stormlet far away on the boundary of her thought refused to be located, refused to give its secret of trouble.

"Oh, you are, you are," he cried, his face wrought with distress. He passed his hand over his face. It appeared that the stormlet in her was like to fetch a tornado through him, as the wont is with humankind. "I've staked everything here; and to think that I shall lose!"

She said nothing for awhile, but stood toeing the rug fretfully. He looked down at her, anger raking up in him distorted visions of what she said and meant. Finding no solace in her caresses, he found terrible pleasure in the pain she caused him.

"Must you leave home, Harry?" she said.

"I have left home." He reposed on the accomplished fact, and would think no further. "I should never go back there in any case." Jim looked up on the two incomprehensibly yet shrewdly. "Oh, Rose, if you don't love me, tell me, for God's sake, and I'll clear out. But I'll never go back there again." He spoke with angry distress, and as he spoke Jim came up and nestled against him. Harry's hand fell on his head in caress.

Rose looked up at him, wide-eyed.

"Harry, I do love you. Of course I love you."

Her tone spoke as though the fact were out of question.

"Then why all this bother and perplexity?"

She came up to him and caressed him.

"Don't mind me if I'm strange, dear!" she said. "I usen't to be like this once. I think I never knew what it was to doubt. But now it seems to have become part of my mind to expect trouble. Doubt is always a part of me now; I'm always looking for things to turn out wrong. I don't know why it is; but it is so. Every little thing starts it."

"But you do love me, Rose?" Jim sat over in his chair and surveyed them.

"Yes, of course I do. I think really you're everything to me, Harry. I suppose some would say—evil-minded people would say—that you're my only chance. Of course you're not. But in another sense you are. I think if I lost you I should lose everything."

"My Rose, you know what you are to me. I needn't tell you, I think. But don't make fresh troubles and perplexities, dear. There are enough as it is, aren't there?"

"Yes; I suppose there are."

Yet as she caressed and soothed him, the stormlet had not moved from its corner of her mind, though its power was diminished. She knew it there; and he knew something there. He came to see, or rather dimly to feel, that there was a restlessness in her mind, and an impatience in his, that consorted not well with each other. His had been born of a wilful life, and the dominant blood of his father in him; hers through an ancient distress and disillusionment striking on a firm emotional nature. His impatience upcalled her restlessness; and her restlessness excited his impa-

tience. Yet as her head inclined on his bosom, and his lips bent to find her upturned ones, the very passion of fulfilled existence surged through him. Each knew the other his and hers, and stood proudly to fulfil the pledge so plighted. Neither paid heed or attention to Jim, who stood surveying them wonderingly.

When Mr. Bradley came in later he did so with a considerable clatter and bustle.

"You're making a great deal of noise, father," said Rose, starting away from Harry.

"A man is always wise to do that with lovers about the place," said he; whereat she blushed. "Harry, lad!" he continued, "your father's been here."

"So Rose told me." Harry's heart beat furiously, fearfully.

"He's very upset."

"Oh? Anyhow, he was pretty cool when he spoke to me." Harry's manner was defiant.

Mr. Bradley looked quizzically at him and thought, "Like father, like son," but spoke in quite a different tenor.

"You'll have to see him; and as he won't see you except in his own house, you'll have to go and see him there. Oh, I know it's not nice," he added, as distaste flashed over Harry's face, "but you'll have to do it."

"I can't go there," protested Harry.

"It's for you to say, of course. You'd be the better man, though, if you went through with it. It's a strange thing for a son to be afraid of his father, I think."

"Yes, but whose fault is it, Mr. Bradley?" Harry opened out in protestation.

"Well, well; we'll have to talk about it. Later will do. Perhaps it's too near the event now."

Rose slipped her arm into Harry's, seeing him perturbed and distressed.

## XVI

SOME evenings after this they sat round the fire, and one thought was in all their minds. Harry sat between Rose and Jim, while Mr. Bradley sat over on the opposite side surveying them. Rose's hand had stealthily dropped down beside her, and called an aëry soft summons to its unobedient fellow that till then had lain in Harry's pocket. Thus, her soft hand in his, Harry was swayed between the delight of her presence on the one hand, and by his predominant perplexity on the other. Jim, contrary to his usual custom, was not reading, but sat close against Harry on the other side, alternating a moody gaze into the fire with a sly upward glance at his new friend. Mr. Bradley, surveying them from over the way, smiled gently at the united picture the three of them presented, the two lovers, and he who was not alone the tragic emblem of the past, but a symbol in himself of the dark hand of perplexity that overhung the company now. Though he smiled, that was not to mean, however, that his thoughts were woven all of the pleasant. Over his mind was the same perplexity that held Harry, and that in a lesser degree brooded over the heart of Rose. It was the deep question of the next move to be taken.

Mr. Bradley was about to speak when Jim forestalled him.

"May I call you father?" said he, timidly quavering in his voice as he looked up at Harry's somewhat melancholy face. "I've never had any one to call

father, and I should like you to be father, if you don't mind."

Harry's face broke out into a rare smile. Turning to Rose, whom a pang of distress had riven, he said—

"May he, Rose?"

Rose looked up half-shyly at him in a new responsibility of maternal decision. The smile from his face lit over hers as she replied—

"I suppose so. He'll have to some time, won't he?"

Harry conveyed the news to Jim, and called across to Mr. Bradley.

"That's what you call a family compact, eh!"

Mr. Bradley smiled; and said softly—

"There's another family compact that'll have to be attended to sooner or later."

"I'll go to-night," said Harry, with sudden energy.

"To-night?" echoed Rose.

"It's not a bad plan to clip the thing before it stales in your mind, Harry," said Mr. Bradley. "With you especially," he added.

"Yes; and I'll go now, and get it done with," went on Harry, taking the wave of resolution as it rose before him. He stood erect in witness that he fore-swore dalliance.

"Well, Rose," said Mr. Bradley, when Harry had gone, "I admire your choice. I think he's a fine fellow. I've come to think better of the question of breeding, too, since I've known him. Breeding gets nerves, and nerves are a fine thing to a man. I needn't ask your opinion," he added, pinching her cheek, and stroking a finger over her eyebrow.

"Father," she said fearlessly; "I think the world of him. Of course I love him; but more than that, I think him perfect honour. I love the way, for in-

stance, he assumes a simple equality in our love."

"Love is equal, you goose."

"Yes, but how many people think that, father? Yet Harry scarcely thinks of it; he acts on it. Of course I oughtn't to feel grateful, because it's the proper state of affairs; but it touches me inexpressibly. One oughtn't to feel grateful for the sun, but one does. It only shows what disappointments we all get when we feel elated at getting our due."

"Rose," said Mr. Bradley playfully, but with the hard ridge of earnestness moving strongly in his voice; "don't make the initial mistake of expecting a demigod. Take him for a human, and you'll come out of the fire all right. Believe him to be a fair man and you won't make for yourself a bed of disappointment to lie in. Love is the magnificent thing of the earth; and if it's in discredit anywhere, it's because lovers ask angels instead of mortals: which, you know, is really surprising, because angels are often a bore. Mind you, I think well of Harry; but he's impulsive and he's impatient. Such men make the finest of mankind, but they also make the frailest of men. Their fellow-men admire the fineness; but their wives murmur at the frailty. Don't you be caught tripping. Do you know why I tell you all this?"

"No," she said, heeding him a little impatiently.

"Well, I tell you because you are rather apt to think, little Rosey, that because you've had one nasty experience it has taught you all wisdom. Life doesn't stand still, you know. Now, don't pout!" Rose was looking discountenanced. "I'm not a preacher, as you know, though I sometimes like to think myself a politician. I'm only concerned in your welfare; and I may say, little girl, in his too, for I like him."

"No, I oughtn't to be cross, for you're a dear old

dad." Rose recovered her humour and his with a salute.

It was late that night before Harry returned; and he came in with a clouded distressed countenance. Flinging off his coat he said—

"I've had a walk round to think it out. It's all over there." Rose clung to his arm and led him into the warmed room. "The only one with sense was Bobby; and he said it all depended on the girl, that some girls were rotters and some stunners. I think the virtue or vice of my action depended for him on which category contained you, dear. Unfortunately he's forbidden the opportunity of finding out for himself."

"How was Dr. Denzil?" Mr. Bradley said coolly, to steady him.

"As he always is with me, cool, dignified, implacable. If he'd only unbend a bit we could, perhaps, come to an understanding. But then, I suppose, if he had been the kind to unbend he'd never originally have been so autocratic."

"What did he say, dear?" asked Rose.

"He started off by taxing me with an unfilial attitude. You see, I never can get at the man, we've got no common platform. He denies me with the first thing I ask, my freedom of action. In other words he denies me myself. I wish to be Henry Denzil, or Henry Foggetty for that matter, but myself anyway; he wishes me to be Dr. Ernest Denzil's son, an appendix to himself, a digit on his hand. The whole thing's so impossible. I have as much right to deny him his freedom of action as he mine; but I don't."

"Perhaps you do," said Mr. Bradley quietly. "You dispute his right to turn you off."

"No, I don't. I think it's ungenerous, and we have a right to expect of every man that he be generous.

But I don't dispute it. If he doesn't like Rose" (he drew her to him) "let him say so. But why can't we part as friends?"

"I'm afraid, Harry, you're expecting an impossible world. But come, you're not telling us the facts of the interview; you're giving us your views on the universe."

"Well, he received me with cold pomp—there's no other phrase for it, because that's just what it was. I suppose I was antagonistic; I don't know. If I was, it was in self-defence: I had to be. That was scarcely a good start. He asked me what I meant by my line of action. I asked what line of action. At that he drew himself off in that high perplexing way of his, and said he didn't wish an argument."

"I never liked him," burst in Rose; "and that was just what I didn't like in him."

"Go on, Harry!" said Mr. Bradley.

"Well, that was a false start; the first, for we had several like that. I could never get under way. We had no common ground to get the feet of conversation going on. I said I wished to get an understanding with regard to my engagement. He said he didn't recognize any of my actions. So there we were, floundering again! I don't know whether he thought he would wear me out. I'm afraid I got irritable."

"What did you say?" asked Rose.

"I told him he professed himself as a Radical, and the first Radical principle was personal freedom. I said I was entitled to my freedom of person, as he was to his, and therefore we ought to be able to discuss this thing as equals."

"H'm! that was scarcely wise. But still, what did he say to that?" Mr. Bradley said, a flickering smile travelling his face as he spoke.



"Said he wanted no impertinence, and that I was please to remember the difference in our positions."

"You're well rid of him, dear; that you are!" broke out Rose, with flashing eyes.

"Rose!" expostulated Mr. Bradley.

"Well, I meant it, and I said it." She implied determination.

"Then Cicely came in," Harry went on. "You can guess how she went on. I like Cicely; but her Philistine gush and stupid lamentations got the better of me then. I had to indulge in a little sarcasm as a styptic for her. I'm afraid I didn't come out of it with shining colours, Mr. Bradley."

"Never mind! no one ever does in critical moments; that only happens in books. Go on!"

"Well, Cicely's gushing intervention had one useful end. It made the fact of my engagement with this dear girl unavoidable. He said if I wished to return I would have to renounce all my folly, that's how he put it. I said, engagement or no engagement, having once left I didn't propose to return. He opened his eyes at that, and Cicely looked frightened."

"What did he say?" 'Twas Rose that asked.

"He sneered, and asked what I proposed to do. I said I hadn't thought of that; that was a later difficulty; one was enough at a time. He asked why I had come round. I said, to shake hands. He said he feared that was impossible."

"The beast!" Rose exploded again.

"Rose, Rose, Rose," crooned Mr. Bradley softly, in gentle reproof.

"I asked if I could have all my clothes, pictures and books, with the money I have in the bank. He said, certainly; and then turned calmly to a book he was reading. So I went out, followed by Cicely. It was

something he said as I got to the door that maddened me."

"What was that?" It was Mr. Bradley's quiet voice this time.

"He said he supposed I intended living on your charity."

"Well, suppose you do. Are you above it?"

Harry looked bewildered. This was a point of view not thought of by him. He burst out—

"Yes, I think I am."

"I don't mind. There are two ways of looking at it. What will you do?" Mr. Bradley's quiet reserve of strength, and the modulated tone of approval in his voice, aided Harry immensely.

"I'm going up to London next Monday." He spoke with the energetic determination of a strong resolve.

"Next Monday?" Rose's voice quavered.

"Yes, dear. Don't make it difficult for me!" he whispered.

Silence enveloped them with its quiet pall. Not the silence of peace; the silence of stress and agitation, rather! Deep called across deep from heart to heart. A common fusion, they knew then, such as human souls rarely achieve. It was a simple decision he had taken, one as frequent as there are mouths to fill, as common as there are lives to live; but to him, and therefore to them all, it was as fateful as a crisis, as momentous as the fall of Troy, for it meant the turning from an old order to a new. And the new was shrouded in mystery. How little the eye of man discerns the crises that break about him, as starting bubbles round a craft in an inland stream! It was Rose who broke the silence.

"Can't we all go up there?" she asked.

"I expect," said Mr. Bradley, "if Harry wants to

be looking for work it would be scarcely wise to distract him."

Harry was pleased that Mr. Bradley so helped him. Yet he pressed Rose closer to him as though it were a mutual loss; for it indeed was so.

"What did you propose to do, Harry?"

"I don't know, Mr. Bradley. A friend of mine is a leader-writer up there. He was at Balliol with me. I think I'll go and see him first."

## XVII

THE decision that Harry had come to in the clear frosty night after the unsatisfactory interview with his father, seemed a matter of wholly different texture the following day. Seeing he had gripped resolve he abode by it. But he was so far man as still to be sentimental. He knew that the virtue of life lies in stressful decisions; and he knew, therefore, that now, for the first time, he was about to live, with all that that meant of anxiety, fear and disappointment. More, he was eager for the fray. The nostrils of his mind dilated at far scent of battle. This did not mean, however, that had he been put to his decision over again he would have resolved similarly. For his heart rose insurgent, and painted his parting from Rose as a cataclysm dire, an unmixt evil. She, too, though she took the fact as inevitable, unalterable by lament, found in it a theme for tragic tears. It was not that he had so far to go. But any distance that forbade daily caresses, or, at least, daily visual feasts, took tragic hues, shook a hateful malignity of Fate at them. It became like the tearing of flesh off bone for them, this parting; and they shuddered at thought of it as at

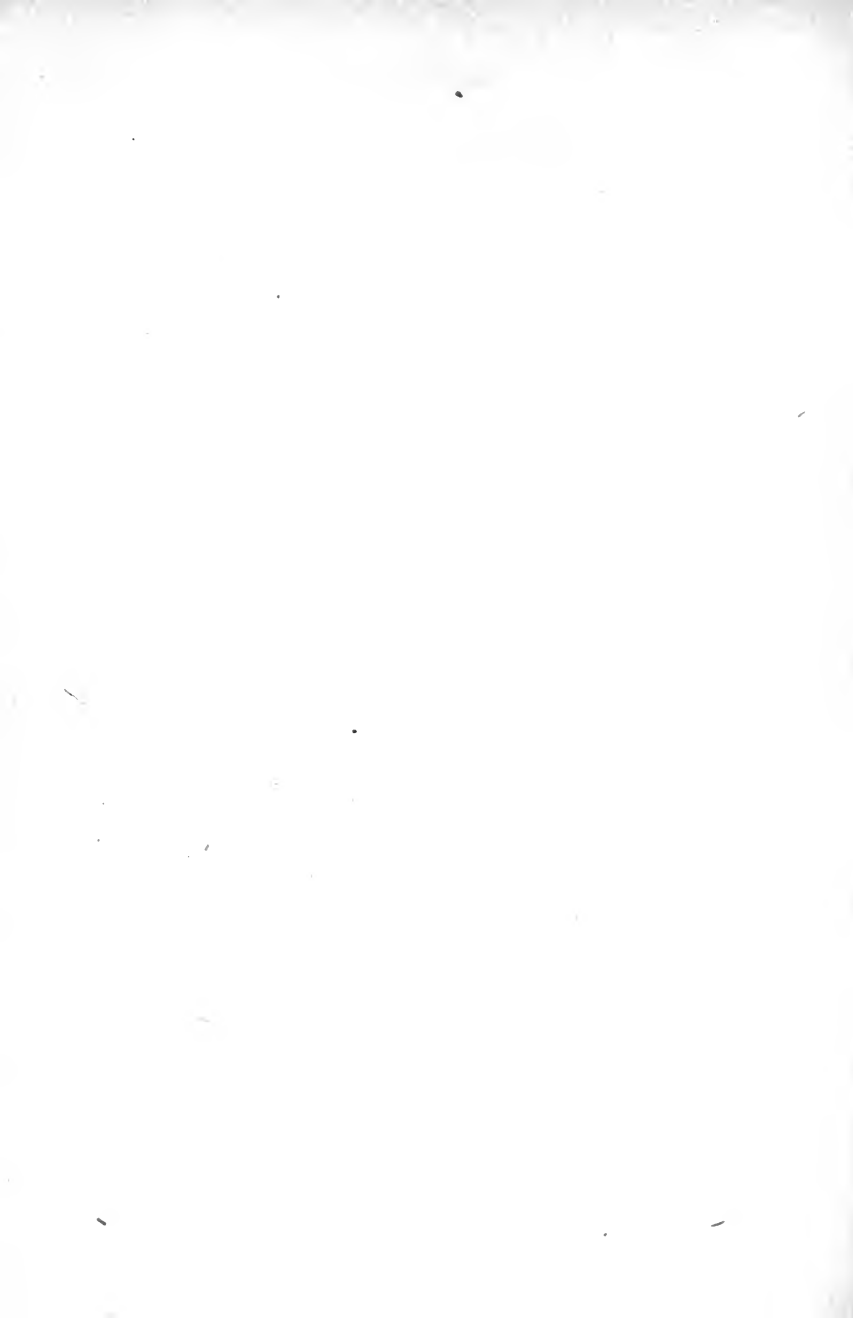
a surgeon's knife. It was well for him that he had not had to make his decision again.

So when the train drew out of the station, and the figures of Rose and Mr. Bradley waved farewell for him, he thought that that hour sounded the very knell of good cheer, and found the very abysm of bitterness and gloom. Her eyes had held back their tears; but he could see them, nevertheless, like a great tide rolling through her soul. He cursed life as needlessly tragic, as he buried his face in his hands remembering the vision of her.

Let him have his sorrow to the full; for it was not only sentimentalism. Had he been going to erect a certain home for her, even the fearful interposition of time betwixt them had been lightly waved aside. But he was issuing on an unknown world, and knew it, and knew not what it held for them. The expectation of good has found its name in Hope; the fear of evil has found its name in Dread. And where uncertainty is, Dread steps in. Dread stepped in now; and made their parting doubly sore.

He was still bowed in relapsed misery when the lights of London scintillated far ahead of the urgent engine. And when he trod its pavements Melancholy claimed him, his very overflow of healthful emotion aiding her in conquest of him.

BOOK III  
COGITATIONS



## I

It is no part of the chronicler's task to record matters not incident to the theme he tells. The swell of the wave in its rise and fall demands that there be no rifts to mar its curve. It demands, too, with no less imperious tone, that there be no bulbous protuberances to spoil its beauty. It is the perfect artist that finds the balance betwixt the contrary temptations of needless digression and an impatience that leaves canyons to be leapt. Moreover, it is an artist that seeks neglect.

Thus, it is no part of the present matter to trace with minute detail Harry's doings in London during the first period of his sojourn there. Yet that subsequent matters may come to a due and meet understanding, it is necessary that the sequence of his actions be established. No crisis is there, in a man's life, but has its antecedent preparation. The ripples that spread far and wide on a fair sheet of water seemed to have sole cause in the pebble that struck and disturbed its peace. But it is not so. Back through the pebble to the hand that hurled it, back thence again to the thought that conceived the deed, and again to the mood that conceived the thought, the occasion that conceived the mood, thus an anterior eternity is discovered no less than an eternity that rolls swiftly forward into the unknown. Crises are knots in an endless texture; and seeing that their fashion is the fashion

of the texture, the texture must needs first be understood that the knot be truly known. How much of the texture demands examination depends on the knot; how much receives it depends on the artist's vagary.

The date after his arrival, Harry had sought out his friend Battersby, and put his case to him.

"My dear man," Battersby had replied, "your excellence has fallen in eclipse. I suppose you would like to have it called heroic love; but I call it a sample of the modern tendency to independence, and a deuced bad example at that. It's a bad case, 'pon my word! Erotic mania started it, but it was only waiting to be started. That's my diagnosis."

"Never mind about diagnosis; it's rather a question of prognosis I'm after."

"Pray explain; and, incidentally, have some claret. It's not bad, though I've tasted better."

"Well," Harry had said, "I'm kicked out, and have to earn a living, with a view to marrying at the earliest possible moment. Alma Mater turned out a better son in me than she did in you, so far as titular honours go, so I ought not to have a difficulty. I want you to help me." Battersby's reversion to the manner of his college friendship struck like a tonic air on Harry's brooding melancholy. He was some few years Harry's senior, and had shared two years at Balliol with him.

"I know. Want to storm things. Well, it won't be done. Thought anything of journalism?"

"That's just what I did think of. You know I've got a few ideas, and have thought a bit. I didn't do so badly at debate."

"Ideas? Good heavens! Well, you keep dark about those, old chap, or you're crippled at the start. If you're a born propagandist, why, then, you'll try



and sneak them in surreptitiously, and hope for the best. Fleet Street doesn't want ideas; they smudge out the ruts, and people like going in ruts, for then they know where they are. That's just an initiatory caution, old man, or you're shelved. Try and say what everybody else is saying, right or wrong, only try and say it a bit more lightly—or heavily, as the case may be; I'm on a 'lightly.' The heavy brigade pays better, though."

This worldly wisdom struck chill across Harry's ardent hopes, but they rose triumphant, and he had replied—

"Well, leave that! Do you know of anything, though? And what do you advise me to do?"

"I believe Timpkins wants a junior leader-writer—Timpkins writes for the *Morning News*. I believe he's a brute to work under, and I understand their pay is shocking. Still, that's the only thing I know of. You might try at that for a start, anyway. By the way, where are your diggings?"

"I have only just come up. I stayed at an hotel last night."

"Thought you looked pretty glum. You'd better get quarters somewhere about here in Chelsea. It's a rotten district, but it's as good as most. Until you do, what d'you say to putting up here? You can have that sofa; or, if you like, I'll have the sofa, and you have the bed; or take turn and turn about; any device that commends itself to you. More claret?"

"No, thanks. I say, Battersby, how do you think I'll do? I don't feel quite so buckish as I did this morning."

"Have some more claret, then. Oh, I've no doubt you'll do. We all struggle through one way or another; though Heavens knows how some of us do it.

By the way, let me see, I forget, you're a Radical, aren't you?"

"I suppose most people would call me that. I'm rather a free lance, as a point of fact. I think party politics all nonsense; it's atrophying to the intelligence."

"Oh, mercy me! I say, Denzil, you'll have to stuff all that in your pocket. We don't want truth, we want the party cry as loud as possible, and the shekels to the man with the loudest voice. The 'leader's' the place where the crying is done."

"But, my dear chap, independence of thought is the fibre of being."

"Well now, I begin to have hopes of you. That was rather finely put. You may say that, but you mustn't mean it; above all, you mustn't act on it. May I take that? No, I won't, though; I'll respect your copyright. Honour among thieves."

Battersby stood representative to Harry of certain immense forces of inertia that quailed his thought. It was with something of deep despondency that he had replied—

"Thanks, I'll stay here if you'll let me. This thing's beginning to get on my nerves."

"Do. But keep your tail up. Failure generally makes its beginning in the man, and then in his work. Let's go and have some lunch."

"But I'm taking you away from your work."

"Not a bit. Or, to be candid, you are; only it doesn't matter. It's only some foreign philosopher I'm translating on commission. It ekes out the shekels, that kind of thing."

Which conversation had left a dire impression on Harry's mind, and increased his gloom to a considerable extent, as his letter to Rose that night had shown.

It had been his second, for immediately on his arrival he had written her a love lamentation of considerable length. And he had received one from her that morning, sent to a predestined post-office, couched in terms strangely similar to his own of the night previous, love having used the instrumentation of each to pour out its hatred at a severance in those it had spun to unity.

That evening he had brought over his impedimenta, and lodged them with himself in Battersby's small flat. He had the evening to himself, for Battersby was at his paper. As he had determined to wait till his companion's return, he had a long time to himself and to his thoughts. Which time he had occupied in writing the letter already mentioned to Rose. It was a river of tears. In it he called down Heaven to witness that some dire kink in this world's constitution was responsible for the devastating fact that the rude hand of separation should be interposed ever at any time between two wedded hearts. It was an outrage.

Love is a pledge of eternity; but it begrudges the loss of a moment of time.

## II

IN spite of the melancholy that bound Harry, he had set about doing what lay in his power to rectify his financial lot with sane considerable earnestness and energy. It gave him an opportunity of throwing off the lethargy which is melancholy's concomitant fellow. Moreover, the more speedily he advanced now the nearer he came to that stupendous moment when they would be able to make the supreme fact of their high unity complete in every sense of the word. For this he worked; and since no disillusionment or disappoint-

ment had come to mar the sweet vision that the Future waved before him on her dim horizons, despite his present melancholy, his prospect was full of all hope for him. Even Battersby's worldly wisdom had failed to quench his reviving ardour.

Battersby had procured Harry an introduction to the Timpkins of his reference, and had pronounced the introduction "as good as the job." Which had duly elated Harry, the elation suffering some damage as a fortnight passed and no reply came to the letter Harry had written.

"Lord bless you, Denzil, they never hurry. Of course, you know, they're pretty busy. Besides that, supplicants have to wait always; it's the first principle of law and order. But you'll get a reply; the introduction has assured that much."

"But——" Harry had started, somewhat embarrassed.

"Shekels? Aye! They do persist in going out in a most uncomfortable way, that's true. I wonder if my chief would send you a few books to review."

"Would you mind asking? I'm afraid I'm a howling nuisance to you, Battersby. I'm sorry; but you're the only man I can get hold of."

"Besides, you've got me cornered in my flat. But you're right to keep on pegging away at me; it's the only way; importunity is a great art. Certainly I'll ask."

"Thanks!"

"If you get them, praise them indiscriminately. Praise with a judicial 'ahem,' is the paying method; then everybody's pleased, the paper gets its advertisements, and the reviewer puts in a word for his self-respect. That's for prose. Poetry is to be condemned just as indiscriminately as prose is to be

praised. That is, except for a few pot names; but those you'll never get, nor I either; these go to some friends of the poet in question, who cover him with unction whatever drivel he tolls out. He has made his name, you see."

Harry had smiled at this.

"There seem to be rules of conduct in journalism," he had said.

"Oh, aye! rather. It's a trade, you see, and you've got to know the ropes. The same thing's done the same way every time. I've heard those commercial chaps that come to us for advertisements sometimes say they have to study the precise psychological moment to pick an imaginary hair off the lapel of a man's coat to bring off a large order. Now that's what I call an art. It's dealing in correspondences of thought and emotion. In comparison with that we're merely shrieking platitudes or falsehoods."

The following morning Battersby had informed Harry that his chief had said that stern necessity ruled out with an inflexible hand that the reviewing band was in no way to be enlarged. Nor would he permit an exception to the rule; nor would he allow a temporary aberration by way of pecuniary relief to the needy. Harry smiled sardonically, as he gulped down his disappointment. But compensation had come with the post, bearing an epistle from the aloof Timpkins, bidding him attend the following evening at the *Morning News* office with regard to his application.

The following day being a Sunday, London was wrapped in its mysterious Sabbatic calm. Whencever it comes, like a dim sanctity enveloping Britain, it was something far other than the mere cessation of labour, far deeper than the mere taking up of an ecclesiastical habit: it was a cause rather than an effect, a

thing intrinsic rather than a shade or lustre. So Harry had felt it as he stepped through the quiet glooming streets. A fog had wed a mist, and in mingled essence they held the parks and streets in conquest. It was early afternoon, and Battersby had gone out to see some friends—as he said, seeming unduly awkward and mysterious about so simple a social function. So Harry had journeyed out too, to while away the hours before eight o'clock, when he was due at the *Morning News* office.

Like a marshalled regiment of impossible monsters loomed the houses through the mist, flanking each street. It seemed to Harry that he crept microscopically along the ridge of a high canyon, a russet shade of light making the arc of heaven immediately above his head brighter than the flanking walls about him. There were few abroad in the streets. Now and then, as the fog swept by, through the windows of the sombre houses could be seen the reflections of cheerful fires leaping about the walls of the room. Hearth-clusters of congregating mortals could be imagined, with such occupations as imagination could conjure for them. To say that Harry had envied them would be to reveal psychological mysteries. Indeed, truly, envy kindled in him as fancy painted for him pictures of warmth and hearth-side joy. Yet he was not altogether free of that sensuousness, morbidity perchance, that luxuriates in imaginary scenes of joy that to share would be to devastate. A certain inherent grain of melancholy was quickened. A cheerful hearth beckoned him at Battersby's flat. Yet he chose to roam in envy of imagined felicity.

Thus he wandered into St. James's Park, whence the fog had fled, leaving only its tearful silver mist. The cry of strange water-fowl seemed peculiarly con-

sonant with his mind in its piercing melancholy. He noticed a crust of ice on the waters; and looked through the mist vainly to discover the quaint denizens of the further islands. Thus he took his way into the Green Park, where for the first time the hum of the mother-city's life broke on his ears, like a distant noise of breakers borne down a wind.

In among the dripping trees he went, in fanciful melancholy. He little knew it, but the full force of melancholy had been awakened in him; firstly by brooding in loneliness over the conjured beauty of Rose, and secondly by the continual thwartings he had lately known. This had aroused a fine force of imaginative emotion in him; had called it out from its slumber in the remoter depths of his soul. This had quickened his intellect, and given him a rare depth of thought. It had also quickened his sensuousness of nature, and was, subsequently, to set snares about his feet. A subtle instinct for the luxurious, and thus for stimulating novelty of emotion, was being stirred into activity, giving his power of passion a dangerous hue. It found vent now in a species of self-torture that brooded continually over his absent love, making her letters serve for him as wands to call up a mighty wave of rebellious emotion, that flowed back to her in his responding epistle of the same day. He conjured heaven, earth and hades to sound the height, breadth and depth of what she was to him. She towered out through the earth, and became all things to him. Tempest upon tempest of silent yet most potent emotion the thought of her waked in him. He dreamt of physical union with her as the consummation of a past eternity, and the dating of a new eternity. He shook angry defiance at the ruinous order of a callous universe that held them apart, and would not aid in making a spirit-

ual union a physical and companionable unity. It was, he thought, to robe eternity in the incongruous garments of time; and then he struck the eternal melancholy of Poetry, she who sings in circumstance the things that transcend circumstance. He who stretches after a further aurora is apt, at length, in weariness, in anger, to court wild sensation, or trample down the barriers of prohibition.

Harry's gloom had been pierced by radiant gleams, owing to the expected interview with Timpkins. And as he turned his steps into Piccadilly, to make his way to a glorious saloon where music aided the digestion of a humble meal, the prospect quickened the hope in him. He built pictures of an early home erected by his labours. He conjured the scenes of warmth and felicity, for which he was to be the creative magician. Yet always at the back of his thought there was the sceptical expectation of evil.

It was, therefore, with some trepidation and excitement that he sent his name up to the mighty Timpkins; and was ushered into a large waiting-room to await the mighty one's pleasure. Through the windows of the room, chimneys and roofs hung about him in the air, irresponsibly floating gigantesque in a wet mist pierced by distant light. In the room there was an array of desks covered with blotting-pads and "copy" paper. From the magnificent frontages of the various newspaper offices he had imagined a regal state, a pomp of might and power, as marking the rooms in which the world-stupendous pronouncements were penned, from which they rolled forth to conquer or devastate. This place looked like an untidy school-room. Even the edges of the blotters were marked with inelegant sketches of dubious merit.

He switched on one electric light whereby to read



in the pervading gloom. But it was fitfully he read as he awaited his momentous interview. At least half-an-hour passed before he heard a door open in the farther end of the room. Looking up he saw a little man limned against the brightness of the open doorway. The light was behind him, but Harry could see that he was buxom of girth, short of stature, thin-haired as to scalp, with short, fiercely-turned moustaches, and that he wore an obsequious monocle.

"Your name's Denzil?" this figure demanded.

Harry acknowledged the truth of the appellation.

"Very well. I'll see you presently."

The figure had disappeared, the door had closed, and gloom had reigned again, and Harry was left perplexed. Why did he do that? he thought. For a display of his importance, I suppose. Harry was beginning to discover that it is a favourite jollity with power, however dubiously or adventitiously acquired, to sport with weakness with fiendish intent to upcall fear, as a cat with mice.

Another twenty minutes elapsed before a flitting youth came to inform him that Mr. Timpkins wished to see him.

In the great man's presence Harry felt a nauseating contempt for him. He struck his quick instinct as being overweeningly vacuous. Nevertheless, he preened his feathers to please.

"So you think you could help us with our leaders?"

"Yes, I thought so."

"What experience have you had?"

"Oh, none!" Harry had begun to fear this perpetual question.

"I see. What made you think of applying here? Who put you up to it?"

Harry scarcely saw the bearing of this inquisitorial

search into his motives and meanings; but he responded patiently—

"Mr. Battersby. He's on the *Daily Urgent*."

"Why didn't Mr. Battersby apply for it himself?"

"I think he's pretty comfortable where he is."

"So you haven't had any experience, you say?"

"No."

"I'm afraid you're too amateurish."

Harry's heart fell. He could well-nigh have wept. But the great man went on, surveying him critically:

"Still, I might give you a trial, to see how you shape. How much were you expecting as salary?"

Harry had not yet learned the secret of rating himself highly, owing to a stubborn faith in the rectitude of the world. He therefore stated a figure far less than the great man had had in his thought, who thereupon replied—

"Oh, no, we couldn't afford that; not for an amateur! It could only be a trifle. Indeed, at the start it could only be a mere honorarium, an honorarium merely. On that basis I might be able to arrange it, I think. You see, you're only an amateur." Again the critical superiority travelled over him.

Harry's heart had fallen. The fancies of an early home, a happy Rose to await him soon at his own threshold, faded into gloom. He knew that this great man could only advantage an innumerable host of dim shareholders, for none of whom he cared a twig; and that therefore his attitude could only have sprung from an innate and inordinate love of browbeating for browbeating's sake. His contempt for him took a bitter turn. Nevertheless, this was a beginning; and he was in no position to neglect beginnings. Therefore he listened with patience as the great man told him how to rule the world through the medium of

leader-writing. And presently he went off with some statistics just up in proof from the press-room, with the great man's somewhat affected accents singing in his ears, to construct the cadence of two hundred omnipotent words.

When this was done he bore the result somewhat unceremoniously into the inner sanctum, somewhat to the great man's surprise.

"What! Done already? Well, leave it here, and I'll call you presently about it," he said, looking up from his work.

Harry had not been accustomed to treatment that assumed a minion in him; and the tone irritated him. He went out, sick at heart, and toyed with a paper. There was another man working out there with him, his senior, presumably, in priority of function and importance; but one, nevertheless, that looked as though he had been through the process with such admirable success that fearfulness and meekness looked askance in every feature of him. A quill-pen lay handy, and Harry tore this to shreds in sheer misery of soul. Somewhere in his soul weeping was done; but his eyes were dry. He and his co-partner in gloom had not exchanged a word; nor did they now. Outside the fog rose to greater density, lying up against the window-pane.

Presently a dim voice hailed him through the closed door. He went in. The great man was making digs and dashes at his sonorous English with a large blue pencil, and as soon as Harry appeared began—

"I say, this won't do, Denzil. It's amateurish; too frightfully amateurish. You'll never do if you go on like this. Besides, it wastes my time. My time's most important. Take these sentences: 'It must not be too easily thought that the matter can be closed

with a platitude. The question is too far-reaching for so trite a settlement. It may even be necessary to suspend judgment until truth evolves itself out of the mass of conflicting data.' Now, who does that hit? We want to *hit*. Besides, it's not journalism. It's amateurish, my boy. How can we suspend judgment while the other side is hitting away? We've got to show that they've no foot-room to stand on. Where d'you think politics would be if we had to wait while truth evolved itself? We've got to live meanwhile—that's on its lowest plane. No, no; it's too frightfully amateurish."

"It seems to me a very fair summing-up, don't you think?" Harry ventured hesitantly.

"We don't want summings-up. If you want to sum-up the situation, write a letter to the paper doing so. We may not print it, still! But the leader's not the place for it. Now, what you want to say is——"

Here followed a lengthy peroration on the subject under several heads; followed by the injunction to go and "say that in your own language." Harry went off dejectedly, and attempted to do so. This great man seemed to him much like a pander between him and falsehood, and he seemed to delight in nothing so much as to enforce the cohabitals. Harry's dejected mind saw a furtive and curious likeness between this and certain episodes of his school-days, when an elder forced a younger reluctant comrade to deeds of depravity with the plea that therein lay the test of manliness and knowledge. Thus he succeeded in incorporating into his second product a certain unhealthy bitterness that gave the great man to hope for him.

Half-an-hour after midnight Harry might have been seen standing in the fog opposite the looming building surveying it. The deeps of gloom were in him. He

endeavoured to raise his spirit to the energy of anathema, but he was not able. So he had turned away, to find his way homewards.

### III

THE following morning Harry was up before Battersby to see how his contribution to world-politics looked in print. He had shaken off his gloom of the previous night, though he could not have been said to have joy of soul. Whatever of gaiety there was, however, went flickering down the wind as his eye fell on the sheet containing his mutilated tilt into the enemy's camp. It was nearly all altered; some of the sentences seeming to have earned the blue pencil out of a purely perfunctory spirit. What remained of him stirred distaste in him, as having been conceived in an unhealthy spirit. He thought of his first effort with regret. That, thought he, he would gladly have stood parent to, to the end of time.

When Battersby came in, he was full of inquiries as to how Harry had fared. Therefore the melancholy tale was retailed to him, with characteristic reception.

"My dear man," exclaimed he, "you're grumbling with pea-soup for having peas in it. That's the craft. I suppose your case was the bit worse because of the man. Timpkins has got a shocking reputation. I've never met him, thank heaven! but I hear he seems to profess a notion that the Lord God smiled on him when born. He forgets that if the Deity does do that kind of thing it generally has the reverse effect. You didn't like him?"

Harry had made no reply for a moment. When he

spoke his intonation gave his words a peculiar expression.

"There are some men whom nobody likes, and who wallow in it, wallow in a general distaste of themselves. Timpkins is one of them. I really think he expected me to call him 'sir.' And he has got no capacity either. Look at his leader!" And Harry proceeded to analyze it, displaying such an extraordinary familiarity with it that it was quickly obvious to his friend that a bitter examination had preceded his entry.

"Oh, ay!" Battersby replied. "Looked at from that standpoint it doesn't bear literary examination. But, bless you! it's a good workmanlike sort of proceeding."

"Then why does he blame *my* workmanlike proceeding?"

"Because you're under him."

Harry had grunted. Rebellion was rife in him.

"Pull your socks up, Denzil," Battersby had broken in. "You're coltish. But the breaking-in's got to go forward. See that stove there!" He indicated the anthracite stove that stood in his fireplace, an adoption of his to insure warmth on his late returns from work.

Harry nodded gloomily.

"Well, there's a tale attaching to that. The man that came to fix that saw me pegging away at my work, and seemed to be a bit interested. Began to talk of it, shyly. I liked him. So we began to talk together, and I soon found that he was tolerably familiar with what you and I would call fairly stiff reading. But I noticed that most of it seemed to be on the art side; and I found out that he had done a bit of work in that direction. He was quite a competent judge, too; and seemed to have pretty clearly worked out ideas as to

where dead colour might be used, and where not. I tell you, he'd have been quite a steadier to the Pre-Raphaelites."

"Did you ask him why he didn't go in for it?"

"Certainly! His answer was grim. Said, people didn't want him, and so there he was, fixing anthracite stoves! It's an odd world, Denzil."

This was scarcely calculated to enliven Harry's already depressed spirits. He ejaculated—

"Horrible! You know those lines of Wordsworth—I can't recall them completely—I've a shocking memory for poetry. It's in that supreme ode, and talks of the youth who daily farther from the east travels, and 'by the vision splendid is on his way attended.' You know. Well, these are the lines I was thinking of—

'At length the man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.'

That's true enough as a natural process, without a general conspiracy to beat it out of a man. To think of the eternally true being crushed out of a man by sordid barter and exchange is horrible."

Harry spoke with considerable emotion. He seemed to be fearing the same process for himself. Battersby responded, more pensively than was his wont—

"Looked at from that side, it's tragic! Looked at from the other side, it's comedy. I like looking for the comedy. Modern times don't like tragedy. I don't, anyway."

"It's no use looking for comedy illegitimately, Battersby. You wouldn't think much of the man who found comedy beside a death-bed. Your reply would be that the comedy in a scene like that would not be in

the occasion but in a coarse mind. Similarly there's no comedy in the death of a soul."

Battersby looked quizzically and interestedly at Harry, and then spoke whimsically—

"That's odd! That's what he said."

"What did he say?" asked Harry somewhat listlessly.

"Why, I said to him that if he had lost ideals he had at any rate learned wisdom. He looked strangely on me at that. He was a loosely-built man, with large eyes that disturbed one. 'I've thought that out too, sir,' he said; 'and the logical conclusion of it is the laudanum bottle, that's the only alternative wisdom to ideals; unless, that is, you have money.' 'Either the laudanum bottle or thievery,' he put it."

Battersby, when pensive, looked whimsical. It was as though he never let humour off the leash. Harry, failing to see the connection between this and what he had said, said so.

"No, that came after," replied Battersby, as whimsically as before. "He went pottering about with his stove; and then he said suddenly: 'If all men with ideals were to be resolved to slay their bodies themselves before they'd let others slay their souls, Society would be reorganized in less than five years.'"

"Good heavens!" broke out Harry. "A Club of Suicides!"

"Yes, and he had got text for it, too. 'Better lose your life than lose your own soul;' you know; I forget how it goes."

"Who and where is this man?" Harry said suddenly. "I'd like to find him out."

"Don't know. Never seen him since. I made him stop and have breakfast with me; but nothing would make him revert to the topic."



Silence fell on them. Tragedy brings the same disquiet among men as Truth. Battersby found it only possible to continue in the same atmosphere by whimsical breathing. Harry took it as his natural air. Battersby toyed the solemn thing; Harry took it tenderly in hand. Battersby turned with relief to his daily paper. A daily paper to Harry had been a profanation.

As Harry sat thinking the whole matter over with knit brows, he did not know that Battersby was regarding him intently. The thoughts of both were impenetrable.

#### IV

IT was some weeks after this that Rose and Mr. Bradley came up to London. "Thought we'd kill two birds with one stone," wrote Mr. Bradley. "Rose has a strange fancy to see you, and, as for myself, I've got to be seeing a doctor. This winter is perishing me." Harry had written informing them of his appointment at the *Morning News*, and both Mr. Bradley and Rose had noticed that his letter had not shown the elation that might have been expected. Indeed, his letters had been so gloomy and depressed as to agitate Rose. Though she had had a sore enough trial of her own, she did not know that most terrible of soul-wearying experiences that is spoken of blithely as "making a living." Hers had been deep, sharp, cataclysmic. Harry had set his feet for the first time on what is to many the everlasting treadmill till they drop foredone into the grave.

Harry had taken a room near his friend, and it was therefore as one who had begun to strike for himself

that he had expected them. Yet, though his external aspect was this, he always had the devastating feeling within him that his tenure at the *Morning News* was a most insecure matter. He did not know whether this was a right instinct of his, judging swiftly a certain misfit that could not by any possibility long continue, or whether it arose from the love Mr. Timpkins had of harrowing him by spinning him continually over the pit of a possible dismissal for incompetency. However it arose, it harried all peace of soul from out him.

All this was apparent in his letters to Rose. Her quick instinct caught the mood in which the words had been written, and yearned for him. Whatever there had seemed distasteful to her in the fact that Harry had won higher heights than she in his sacrifice, was gone now. Her one thought was of infinite yearning for him who too evidently was withholding from her some of the deep depression that weighed him down.

Thus, when at length the day arrived when she and Mr. Bradley sped to London, her emotion stretched wide to make shelter for his gloom. And he, as he awaited her, striding up and down the platform of a dismal station, looked for her as might a prisoner hungrily expect the one ray that lights his cell for a bright moment daily.

Mr. Bradley was not of those who in age forget a distant youth that had once befallen them. Therefore he sped first out of the carriage, and having shaken Harry by the hand, and informed him that Rose waited in the carriage for him, turned quickly down the length of the train for the luggage.

"Harry!"

"Rose, oh, Rose!"

She insisted he looked thinner, he insisted that she looked lovelier than ever. Then she told him, what she had omitted to mention in her letters, that it was likely they would be compelled to leave Brokenfield, that his father had succeeded in so focussing the fierce light of public attention upon them that it was impossible for them to abide there in comfort.

"He wanted your address."

"Which, of course, you didn't give."

"No, but he has had one or two very stormy interviews with father which have very much upset him."

"Why does he do it? He knows that that is not the way to get at me."

"Well, father told him he would be seeing you. I rather think he has a message to give you."

"Now then, you two doves!" called a soft voice into the carriage. "They'll be shunting this train in a minute or two. We're all ready, cab and all. Harry, I want a favour from you."

"What is it, Mr. Bradley?"

"Come and stop at our hotel with us!"

"But——"

"As my guest."

Harry looked at the firm, kindly face.

"Very well! I will!" said he.

Some days thereafter Mr. Bradley announced that the doctor's pronouncement was that he should pitch a lengthy, if not final, sojourn on the south coast, that the said physician had gone so far indeed as to choose Winmouth in the far south-west of Hampshire, which injunction he, Mr. Bradley, being a law-abiding man, and one who had a profound respect for flunkeys whether they brandished medicine bottles or bludgeons, intended to obey to the last point of the order. Indeed, instead of returning to Brokenfield it was his

proposal to go forthwith to Winmouth to make the necessary choice of a residence.

He had not spoken to Harry of Dr. Denzil, nor had hinted at any message from him. But now that he spoke in this strain Harry's mind immediately wove this into the general texture. His glance travelled quickly over to Rose, to meet hers half-way in intelligent exchange of thought.

Seeing this, Mr. Bradley judged that communications touching his message had passed, and after lunch spoke with Harry.

"Your father asked me to bear you a message, Harry," said he.

"Yes?"

"Or rather, to be more accurate, to bear you an offer." Mr. Bradley's glance was fixed searchingly on Harry.

"Yes," Harry repeated.

"He says if you'll return to him, apologize for your rudeness in leaving him, and give up all pledges with Rose, that he'll settle five hundred a year on you, and give you the choice of your career. Or, failing that, if you will return to him, and promise not to see Rose until by your own efforts you can afford to marry her, he will see you through your necessary expenses in reading for the Bar."

"Which means that he is relying on my cooling off Rose in the meantime."

"It seems to bear that interpretation."

"I think Rose is worth too much to me for the risk," Harry said doggedly.

"It's a fair offer," said Mr. Bradley.

Harry saw that Mr. Bradley was in a strange and difficult position, and that it behoved him to be judicial when he least wished to be.

"It's not worth the present grief it would mean to me," he said.

"Don't you think your love would last?" said Mr. Bradley. "It's an admirable test, you know, for some."

Harry thought that Mr. Bradley had been strangely searching with him since his engagement with Rose. He was so now. Yet he forebore it. Indeed, it had curiously the effect of a tonic on him. But he knew that this was only so when he opened his soul frankly and cut falsehood cleanly out from him; falsehood, with her sister hypocrisy. Instinctively he felt that so soon as he permitted this brood to take possession of him, the keen knife would become a thing of torture.

"It might not," he said. "I don't see why one should take unnecessary risks with love. It always starts with an ecstasy, and works later, with fair wisdom on the part of the lovers, into deeper and wider channels. To arrest it at its outset, and hold up its course for a matter of years—why, it's only the phlegmatic that can do that, and the phlegmatic don't love; theirs is only a deliberation of sexual choice. Don't you think so yourself, Mr. Bradley?"

"I think there's much in what you say."

"What was his other alternative?"

"He said he'd give you to the end of this month, and then he'd cut you off, lock, stock and barrel."

"He's threatening what I took for granted as a fact already accomplished," said Harry. "But what are you so strange about, Mr. Bradley?" he added.

"Don't think me discouraging, Harry," Mr. Bradley replied. "For one thing I'm in a very awkward position. It's far from my intention to wish to appear

to win you for Rose. I'm not one that heeds a great deal what others say, though I did once; but that has been said, and is partly the reason why I wish to leave Brokenfield. Also, I doubt if you quite realize the task you've taken on." He had Harry's letters in mind.

"I doubt it too," said Harry valiantly. "Perhaps it's as well I don't."

That very matter was the subject of earnest conversation the following day between Harry and Rose. She was deeply perturbed at his despondency. Truth to tell, despondency had largely left him since their arrival. He had the faculty (no rare gift, be it noted, among the annals of men) of throwing off gloom to share to the full what of variety was offered him as joy. It was to him the stimulant of change, apart from the deep felicity that came always to him with the presence of Rose. Yet she had noticed that even his boyish exultancy was not the high-born irresponsibility that she had known in him only a few months back. That his joy was something maturer might even have been to her a theme of sorrow, for women love not change, be it for better or worse. But that it was interpenetrated with bitterness and morbidity, fear of the unknown, indeed, at times—was a subject of anxious perplexity to her. She attributed it to his work, for she noticed that always after reading his paper in the morning he was short of speech and abstracted of manner.

"Is it that wretched man, Timpkins, again?" she asked.

"Oh, well, my dear one, we must take the rough with the smooth." Harry spoke with forced cheerfulness.

"Is he very horrid, dear?" she asked. Their hands

had found each other, and she caressed his in both hers.

"Well, it's scarcely necessary," he said, "for any man to treat another as though he were dirt beneath his feet. Or if he wishes to pander to his plebeian soul by that kind of thing, why should he cut my stuff about? Why can't I have my say as well as he?" Harry pointed to the dishevelled paper. He did not, however, make any reference to his deeper-seated cause of gloom, that he was nightly made aware that his work was "amateurish," nightly told by the great man that there were great doubts if his work would ever really do, being dandled thus over the fear of failure.

"Never mind, dear, I'm sure you'll get on, I know you will. You're better than he by far, because you wouldn't act like that."

He looked in her eyes, and read conviction there.

"Thank you, dear, for that word," said he.

The following day was to be the last that Mr. Bradley and Rose were to have before their departure for Winmouth, so Battersby came over to lunch with them, and Harry had the additional encouragement, for encouragement it was, of receiving his admiring felicitations.

## V

SPRING came, with showers of white blossom, sprays of green bud, soft airs and blue skies. Nothing doubting, birds broke to song. Not theirs was it to be daunted by the showers with which she came, even though they stung with hail the youngling shoots, or bit the morning airs with frost. Well knew they that

Spring had come, and were not irked with doubt by such things. Well they knew that her ways had lain through the wilds of March, and that there yet clung about her garments the memory of the bitter road she trod. The pageant of Nature's green leaf-elves knowing their Queen was come, broke off their gummy wrappings and hung out a festal array as triumphal trappings for her.

So Spring came. And so Spring nigh had gone, melting her crystal charms in the maturer lap of Summer, when Harry might have been seen winding his way through the streets of Chelsea. The morning was blithe and gay. The choice exhilaration of Spring was not in the air. One felt already the more sensuous warmth of later days. He made his way to Battersby's flat, and hearing that his friend was not yet up, said he would await him.

It was not long before Battersby made his appearance.

"Hullo, Denzil!" came his hail. "Nothing the matter, I hope," he added, noting Harry's dejected mien.

"Matter? No. Not if the arrival of the expected is any matter." Harry spoke with pronounced bitterness.

"That's it, be gnostic. You always know that a man has been hard hit if he's gnostic. I grant you it's the best way out of being tearful. But what is it? Got a rise?"

"Yes," said Harry, somewhat grimly; "right out of the place!"

"No!"

"Yes, I say."

"Well, that's what you call beef overdone, ain't it?" Battersby stood over the smitten hero with



puckered face. "You'll have to come back here again, that's all!"

Harry looked up. The moisture in his eyes said that at least something of his bitterness had turned to a healthier emotion.

"I say, Battersby, it's really awfully good of you. And it's the first thing you thought of! You convince me that there's some good in the world."

"If I cause you to amend a pessimist's philosophy I've done some good anyway. I dare say six years of political writing haven't accomplished so much. The great Timpkins, I suppose?" he queried.

"Yes, curse him!"

"Tut, tut!"

"I think it, and I say it."

"Shouldn't think it, then. But come! let's have the yarn! It eases the soul to give it out. Had any breakfast?"

"Yes. No, I didn't. Did I, though? I don't know really, I must have had something." Harry looked confused.

"Bad as that, is it? Well, you'd better keep me company at all events."

The breakfast was a quiet matter. Battersby was a man of some considerable sagacity, as his philosophy of life denoted; to it he added the instinct of kindness. So he said nothing to Harry while the breakfast was in process, but peacefully perused his paper. He refrained even from sympathetic comment. He felt that Harry was so surcharged with emotion that a mere grip of the arm would have caused it to brim over. And though he was himself temperamentally the last remove from a possible tearful display, his placid acceptance of human nature made him aware that, far from such displays being unmanly, they oft-

times denote a greatness of character, a generosity of emotion, most essentially manly. Such he felt Harry's to be. And thus he perceived that Harry's disappointment had dealt him a ruinous blow that shook through to his inmost depth of soul. The more so, since it had come after all these weeks of chafing in the course of his work. More, his receptivity of disposition brought another fact home to him: to wit, that Harry had failed through his own nobility, that a certain touch of baseness and sordidness would have saved him. This made his perceptive regard of Harry a matter of respect.

Breakfast over, he flung his paper aside carelessly, and said—

"Well, old chap, what about it?"

Harry felt more in the mood that permitted discussion of the tender subject.

"Labour was the rock we split on," he said. "Not that any rock would not have done. Fact is, I think he was looking for rocks. He gave me my papers and general data, and I wrote, what I would say to the end of time to be, a clearly reasoned three hundred words on it. From the data before me there was only one conclusion, and it was the one thing I stated. The way he dismissed it made my blood boil——"

"A common experience with Timpkins' interlocutors, I believe," interpolated Battersby.

"Confound him, yes. Then he told me what he wished to have said, and I just looked at him. 'You don't agree with it,' he said. 'It isn't consonant with the facts,' I said. Then we had an argument, and I suppose I made a mistake in beating him."

"Oh, Denzil! you ineffable simpleton!"

"Well, it really wasn't I that beat him so much as the data he himself put before me. He just looked at

me and said, 'I don't care a bit about that, the policy of the paper is the policy of the paper; you write it as I tell you.' I went away, and to my shame I say I genuinely did my best. Just as I was going off he said it wouldn't be necessary for me to come again, but that I could take my cheque to the end of the week as arranged."

Battersby surveyed the fallen hero, and hummed a graceful tune. When he spoke, he spoke whimsically.

"The world is divided into three great classes," said he; "rising in order of nobility, falling in degree of success, the Adapted, the Adaptable and the Intractable. Timpkins belongs to the first, and so also, by the way, did Charles Peace. They were shaped in their mothers' wombs to do whatever life brought them to do, with perfect enthusiasm, utmost abandon, ability even, without any regard to verities or moralities. If they're noble it's by the supreme accident that nobility is for them the paying business; if it meant failure they would avoid it like a hades. They were hewn and shaped for unction. To the second degree belongs one of the name of Hugh Battersby. We know the evil, and we know it as evil, but we do it as well as we can because poverty is a dreadful business. But, Harry Denzil, you're an Intractable. You're one of those strange creatures that stand or fall by Eternity. It's your only justification, even though you deride eternity of existence—which you don't, by the way, do you? I envy you your eternal felicity; I envy Timpkins and such criminals their mundane success; but as for me and my house, we are neither fish nor fowl."

Harry had been gazing at Battersby as he delivered this peroration, though, truth to tell, he had paid no great heed to it. When he spoke it was with the tone

of one that had braced his belt up another two holes. There was a doggedness about it, a fierceness of determination, that boded the issue of conflict.

"Battersby, I want you to help me."

"All that I have is yours—metaphorically speaking."

"No, I'm in earnest. I have a scheme."

"As I say, all that I have is yours in metaphor."

"I want you to help me draw up a list of all the editors in London, and I'll see each one personally whether they will or no. It's a fight between them and me."

"May I recommend one concession you make to me and my house? It's a lamentable thing about human nature, that has received its final expression of asininity in the English character, that people mistrust their own judgments, however sure they seem. Now nobody likes Timpkins, but even the man that despised him would value you with a reference from him, and turn you out without. Therefore you'll have to bluff."

Harry looked at him with a flickering smile. He had not been immune from this subtle practice.

"Life's all bluff. Men with reputations bluff on their reputations. So why the deuce shouldn't you bluff without a reputation? Make a kind of modest half-reference to your experience; don't overdo it, for the Lord's sake. You see, you've broken your continuity, which is disastrous in this effete generation."

Together they drew out a list, and forthwith Harry started out on his campaign. It was with dogged determination he started, but it was with distinctly chilled spirit he returned at night. He wrote to Rose. He wrote also to Mr. Bradley. Hesitation was in both letters, for his sensitive, supersensitive, spirit shrank from being considered a failure. His confidence in

himself as having something to deliver was unshaken. His confidence in himself as being well able to deliver it was also unshaken. But he saw the world ranged in hostility against him. He saw too, that if he won success, it lay the other side of conflict. He longed to be able to withdraw himself from all until he had achieved success.

But, beyond a few books to review, it was little of success that met him during the next weeks, and he began to wear a furtive grimness.

One Saturday night, as Battersby was sitting smoking and reading, Harry came in. His face was flushed, and his manner fiercely gay.

"Hullo, Battersby!" he called out. "Reading—*Kings of Portugal?*"

Battersby looked up at his friend.

"Been having a pick-me-up, Denzil?" he asked quietly.

"One can't have all kicks, all gloom. Must have a bit of the gay. Must take it adventitiously—if not otherwise." He sat himself somewhat unsteadily in the chair opposite Battersby.

"It has its merits," said Battersby. "Only don't overdo it, my dear chap."

## VI

MEANWHILE, Mr. Bradley had struck his encampment at Brokenfield and had removed to Winmouth. The news of his going had come round to Dr. Denzil before the final deed was accomplished, sounding in his ears with fell meaning. For it was his last connection with Harry that was thus to be removed.

He had received Mr. Bradley's communication from

Harry with frozen wrath. Words of anger were denied him, for it was patent to his good sense that the man before him was one who had carried out faithfully, in spirit and in letter, the message he had had to deliver. Moreover, he recognized Harry's accents in the words of the reply he bore. He had therefore asked how Harry was getting on. It fitted not with Mr. Bradley's temperament to avoid the truth of a situation, and his reply had accordingly been none too cheerful. Whatever branch of olive Dr. Denzil had come to bear was thereupon quickly hidden away. His scheme of tactic knew nothing of clemency to a fallen opponent. He reserved clemency for a victorious foe. His instinct knew how to gauge accurately a coming ascendancy, and he would then wave out a lofty truce, thus saving himself a good half of an unavoidable penalty. Which thing is a rare gift. Its present effect was to make him withdraw to his own house with an inner feeling of coming triumph.

Thus his last avenue of approach to Harry was severed, and Mr. Bradley set up his new abode by the sea.

But therewithal there came a new element into Rose's life. For while Mr. Bradley stood in the eyes of the denizens of Brokenfield with decayed saddlery hanging about him, Winmouth was so far a remove that his connection with the hideous social enormity of retail (and single-shop retail!) was finally severed. With his aloof and firm manner he attracted attention, and was sought after. Moreover, the daughter he brought with him was exceeding fair, which, while a bloom of enticement to doughty man, is a theme of fluttering curiosity to eager women. Thus the household came by frequent visitors. And thus Rose won for herself admirers.

There was one especially, who sunned himself in a comfortable competency and frequented the cafés and promenade of Winmouth. Not that he was one of those in whom the gusts of empty passion alternate with vacuous rumination. In truth, a somewhat masterful soul was now coincident in him with years that marched towards maturity. Travel had given him breadth of a certain experience and independency of disposition; a necessary pride had been furnished by a couple of tomes that stood to his name upon the subject of his travel, it having become the requisite of a nomadic soul to take the world into its confidence touching the awe and wonder of nature's highways, with photographic auxiliaries. A doggedness of nature in him was being decayed by a vegetating existence until he had seen Rose. Interest thereupon had quickened through him, bringing vigour. He surveyed her from on high as a most pleasing figure.

Mr. Bradley had brushed acquaintance with him as they had sat overlooking the rippling Channel, and had been interested by the apt examples adduced from remote regions of the earth to give the gay scene before them its effective contrast. Conversation had flowed through deepening channels of interest. The effective fire, sufficient to make so easy an episode a matter of more permanent acquaintance, had been lacking, however, and was not supplied until Rose floated down the promenade and joined them.

The stranger had then revealed himself as Mr. Bevis Urquhart, and the mutual unveiling of identities had led gently to an invitation on Mr. Bradley's part for a visit to be paid. Nor had the stranger allowed any time before he had taken advantage of the proffer.

Rose easily suffered herself to be regaled by one so equipped with wide information, the more so as the

informative mind was accompanied by a serene blandishment of manner. She heard him gladly. Not so Jim, however. Jim fled him at first approach, and never could be induced to abide his company. It was evident Jim needed the touch of passion in character before he could be induced to give his confidence or affection. Perhaps, too, it was the large imperturbability of Mr. Bevis Urquhart that awed Jim. Yet, whatever it was, the result was evident enough, and caused no small degree of amusement to Mr. Bradley. It caused Mr. Urquhart, however, to regard the child with considerable animosity.

"Mother," he asked Rose on one occasion, "who is that man?"

"Oh, only a friend that calls here," she replied. "But, Jim, you really must get over this habit of taking such dislikes to people. Don't you think you are getting a bit too old for that?"

Jim made no reply. He shunned controversy, as he shunned his repugnances among human kind. He eyed his mother solemnly. Rose had it not in her heart to chide him. She knew, too, that Jim usually heeded her reproaches in silence without, however, markedly altering his manner of procedure. She was the more tender with him as she saw in him her own quick sensitiveness. Before she had met Harry her flame of soul had learnt to burn evenly, steadily. Harry had fanned it to new fierceness and magnificence. Not trusting its own height it flickered fearfully, however, which brought back upon her her tender sensitiveness. Instinctively, therefore, she was sympathetic with Jim.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked him, as he still eyed her solemnly.

"Where's father?" he asked abruptly.

"In London working for a living," she replied. It



was the first time he had made reference to Harry's absence.

"Oughtn't we to be with him?" he asked. Never did he remove his gaze from off her.

"It would only make it more difficult for him. I wish we could," she sighed.

"He is my father, isn't he?"

"Yes, of course."

"Because I don't like the big man."

"Well, then, you needn't see him, dear." Jim's strange manner of questioning made Mr. Urquhart seem to Rose a most ominous figure.

After a lengthy silence Jim spoke again.

"Is father happy, mother?" he asked.

"No, I don't think he is, very," she replied, and the sound of tears was in her voice. It was the previous morning only that Rose had received the letter from Harry telling her of his disappointment at the *Morning News*, and that, with the letter of this selfsame day, distressed her because of its bitterness and reserve.

"Are you happy, mother?" he asked.

"Not very, Jim," she replied quietly; "but you mustn't ask so many questions."

"I think we ought to be with father," said Jim. "Other fathers aren't left alone because they have livings to get." Jim spoke with unwonted force and conviction. Evidently this matter had been considerably churned by his thought. He still eyed her steadily.

"Perhaps we should, dear. I think perhaps you're very largely right. But don't bother your mother now, sonny." It was to her uncanny how this son of hers divined her thoughts. So surely as a matter weighed heavily on her mind, Jim voiced it to her, deliberately choosing occasions when Mr. Bradley was not nigh.

If her soul was divided in conflict, she had begun almost to trust Jim to speak for her more true self.

This very thought had agitated her deeply lately. Remaining here in peace and ease while he who was plighted one with her was combating distress and anxiety, seemed to her a surviving notion of an ancient custom that merited prompt dismissal. Her place, she thought, was beside him. She with him could go forth to earn a living, and they could give each other mutual aid and encouragement. If she were equal with him, as her imperious soul demanded, and as he very gladly assented, then she should take with him the buffets and not only wait for a later ease. So she had reasoned. It seemed to her, too, that she might save him from much of that unhealthiness consequent upon buffets and disappointments—such an unhealthiness as she seemed to detect in his letters. Now that Jim spoke it, the thought possessed her entirely. She had been forced to faith in his uncanny divinations.

Therefore she spoke of it to her father, but Mr. Bradley waved it aside as an impossible thought.

"My dear girl, it's impossible," said he. "Taken even from his standpoint, see how it would add to his anxieties! Poor lad! he has his fair full of bother now without your adding to it."

Rose looked at him. She was not perturbed that even his resolute thought failed to grasp what to her was the essential factor of her protested equality with Harry. She could see that it was not easy for a mind not young to be quit of all shackles of convention. Therefore she addressed herself briskly to his thought.

"Father, don't you see that, if I wait for him to get past the rough waters for me to join him, when things are easy I should deserve it if he regarded me as a chattel?"

"A chattel, Rose?"

"Yes, a chattel! A chinaware chattel, if you like, but a chattel all the same. That's what most wives are, and they deserve it. I at least don't want to deserve it."

"But—but the whole thing's so preposterous." Mr. Bradley failed entirely to grasp her point of view.

"That's what his father said. But he left his home for me all the same." Rose spoke as though she was being thwarted of her rights. Pain of indignation was in her voice.

Mr. Bradley caught it, and aroused himself to grapple with a more earnest proposition that his earlier thought had divined.

"Rose, my dear good girl," said he, "what could you do? He won't have my support, and I admire him for it. So he wouldn't have me support you in his household. And what could you do for a living? Think over it, my dear girl! I like your thought, mind you! I think possibly there's some occasion for it. There's a kind of bitterness against things in Harry's letters I don't like. But he'll get over it. It's like measles, you must get past it, and it's its own cure. But I don't see how you're going to help him by adding another mouth that wants filling. Meanwhile, what's to become of Jim?"

"Well, if I can't join him, oughtn't we all to go up there?"

She spoke this tenderly, for while she was daughter, a loved and loving daughter, to him in all senses that mattered, her sensitiveness forbade her seeming to presume on it. He would have been pained to think it, and did not even guess it.

He regarded her gravely.

"No," said he, "let him fight through his own bat-

bles. It'll give him moral muscle, and make a man of him. He'll find his feet later on; and be proud of the fact that no one helped him to soften the battle for him."

Thus spoke the democrat, and the man who, himself, had done for himself what life brought to him to be done. But an ancient voice sang in Rose's ear; and its tune was: "'Tis not good for man to be alone; let us have a helpmeet for him." Battle, thought she, can but bring failure, or a success that is compounded of brutality of thought, unless a tender hand be by to dress a gotten wound. So she betook herself to her grave young son.

Fired by his dogged insistence she wrote her thought to Harry; and it was evident by his reply that he had been moved inexpressibly, but yet failed to understand. His letter exhaled perfume of grateful love. It moved in cadences that told how deeply he had been stirred, and it was with tears of love for him that she read it. Nevertheless, he seemed to regard her proposal as having been stated as proof by her of the length to which her love was content to go, but not put forward as a practical proposition.

This perplexed her, and she spoke no further of it. She thought often, nevertheless, of setting off to join him. An immediate marriage and a joint issue with Fortune was what she desired; though, to her, the rites of marriage seemed perfunctory, a supererogatory insistence on a manifest fact. Yet, though the logic of such a thing was clear before her, she saw, too, that it might mean much misunderstanding, even to Harry, despite the fact that he would infallibly have received her with open frankness. Therefore she abstained; thenceforth she recessed the thought in her mind.

It had been far, far better had she translated

thought to action, had she let difficulties resolve themselves, or not resolve themselves, but only obeyed the one urgent dictate of her reason! But no one may pierce the future or lift the curtain from off pregnant events. Later, this thought rushed back on her, and its very accent was a reproach. She had not erred (or, rather, clairvoyant Jim had not erred) in thinking that Harry needed now most especially the fulfilment of the ancient word: "'Tis not good for man to be alone; let us have a helpmeet for him." Even the past few months had wrought strange disturbance in Harry's ardent and sensitive mind. And it was yet to be more so.

Thus the weeks translated themselves into months. Meanwhile Jim's dislike of Mr. Urquhart had grown on Rose too, with something of fear beside. He was large of physical build; but his manner was positively enveloping. He knew not what it was to be gainsaid. She flourished her engagement ring beneath his eyes, with little effect. He installed himself as her companion; he even proposed to her that he should instruct her in Italian.

If she aired herself on the promenade, he would sail up to her, large and undeniable. Aversion to him made little effect on him. Her wax of distaste flattened itself on his advancing wall of graciousness. He put her out of countenance with herself. Once she told him she wished to be alone. He ignored the remark, and blandly gave her cullings of his experiences in China.

On one occasion she sought him out on the promenade, somewhat to his surprise, and said to him—

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Mr. Urquhart!"

He smiled graciously upon her.

"Yes; Mr. Denzil's coming down next Friday; and

"I should like to introduce you to him." She had nursed this plan all the morning as being an admirable redoubt to thrust him farther afield. She had sought him out to ensure his acquiescence.

"Delighted, indeed, I assure you. When did you say he was coming down?"

"On Friday."

"Tut, tut! When does he return?"

"On Tuesday or Wednesday."

"Now that's very annoying. I have accepted an invitation to stay with some friends from Thursday to Thursday, just a week. Most annoying, isn't it? I shall miss your friend."

Rose's heart sank. There are some men who loom like the inevitable, and this was one of them. Moreover, this was not the first time he had spoken of her beloved as her "friend," deliberately, as it seemed to her, avoiding the term of deeper kinship. She said nothing, but essayed to pass him.

"Are you going up this way?" he asked.

"Yes. But I wish to be alone, if you would excuse me."

"You wouldn't be ungracious to me, I'm sure."

"I don't know. I think I would," she said incisively.

"I remember a day just like this in Tokyo. Only the air there, you know, is such a different matter——"

The voice sung on beside her, in bland reminiscence. It was not to be gainsaid, and its owner was imperturbable. She walked beside him with a sickening sense of revolt.

Thus the summer ripened.

## VII

THUS the summer fled.

Winter had well-nigh come. The interim had seen a deep—and, be it confessed, a deeply bitter—struggle on Harry's part against the powers that be. Historic examples arise to prove that the lot of the free-lance journalist is not the happiest of possible fortunes, even with an established reputation to aid him. To Harry it was a terrible business. Not only had he no reputation, but he had a conscience, he had ideals. He had clung obstinately to these, refusing to huckster them. Though all fell away, he would yet serve God, said he. Yet Mammon was exceedingly fair, holding in her hand, among other benefits, a speedy union with Rose.

Reviews here, and articles there, brought him in a precarious livelihood. His greatest combat was against those who were technically spoken of as having "arrived"; which was a euphemism meaning that whatever they chose to send in took immediate precedence of his work, even though, as only too frequently, it was of far lesser merit. This won the deepest bitterness from him; and the resulting recalcitrancy brought him into considerable disfavour with editors. They themselves may have had to struggle in the past; but this they were only too glad to forget. His hand was against a mutual admiration society, with the public to pay the piper. None thought of the young men, the men with new thoughts, the men with empty pockets. The motto of editors was: "To him that hath shall be given: and from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

He said once to Battersby—

"D—— these sleek editors! They thwart me of

my crust of bread to add an extra *entrée* to a rich man's table."

Battersby had replied—

"'Tis the way of the world, friend Denzil. Even your professing democratic editors are incalculable snobs. They go prostrate before names. What's the matter? Things in a bad way with you?"

It had won more than mere bitterness, however. It had won tears. The blithe postponement of a promised article, because, forsooth! some person who had "arrived" had sent in an imperious message accompanied by one of his, had more than once or twice meant to Harry an awkward visit round to Battersby's flat in the hope of a meal. Or, failing that, a visit to the Hebraic fraternity with his timepiece. He had once or twice attempted protestation, but this had always brought back his articles per return of post, with the accompaniment of a haughty letter. Therefore he had forborne the vile treatment submissively, but it had wrought deep gloom in him.

He was alone, moreover. The parks that summer, and his rooms at nights, had seen tragic deeps in Harry Denzil. They had heard confused speech, too, once or twice, when the forgetfulness that lies at bottom of ruddy liquors had tempted him.

With the month of August things had somewhat mended with him. The owners of the inevitable names that he had come to hate with a deadly hatred, betook themselves for holidays, and he was suffered a more liberal entry into the sacred circles. September, however, had seen him beaten back from the positions he had won, almost, as it were, with bleeding hands. This intensified his mood. In his very bitterness he failed to see that August had, nevertheless, considerably advantaged his position. It had left him with a



fair pocketful of silver. It had also gained him a few, very few, permanent coigns of literary vantage.

Lonely, spiritless, restless, it had become his wont to pace the streets to ease himself. He was not one that readily made friends. His sensitiveness forbade this. He expected too much of acquaintances in the initial stages of friendship; and his too eager advances being turned coldly away from, he would shrink into himself. He demanded that the world hear him gladly; and if it eschewed his enthusiasm, he fled it incontinently. His was the loneliness of the instinctive conqueror. He rarely assimilated himself to others. He dominated or shunned company. Those that forbore his vagaries loved him. Battersby's, for example, was a genuine affection. But he needed essentially the company of comfort. All need it: particularly he.

Had Rose been beside him she had been to him not only the security of rebellious emotion, but the cheerer and inspirer to steady work. Her proposals to join him had attracted him strangely. Naturally disposed lightly to regard obstacles, he would probably have accepted it had it not been for Mr. Bradley's marked and manifest disapproval. It had been theme of loving dialogue between them on the occasion of his visit to Winmouth in the summer. But Mr. Bradley had loomed for barrier; and the more undeniable since he was generally so sympathetic and open minded for new ideas.

Thus he took to striding the streets to ease his chafed spirit, with results not always nor altogether satisfactory.

On one evening in October he paced disconsolately down the Kensington High Street. It rained no longer now, but the pavements bore evidences of the

fact that the waterways of heaven had but lately been at work. The dazzling shop-windows gleamed in them; and a floating mist lent enchantment to the scene. It was amid a mixed throng he strode, and it brought a strange comfort to his restless thought. Bohemia rubbed shoulders with Philistia; Suburbia jostled the West End; Poverty eyed Luxury, and they both looked askance at the straying examples of a careless Artistry.

Suddenly from out the people a face gleamed on Harry, and his brain registered an oval profile and a haunting smile. Quickly his face turned over his shoulder, and he saw, more clearly now, a face that earned the title for beauty, in similar posture to his own, with radiant smile, moreover, some few paces behind him, and receding. He passed hesitatingly on; yet looked back anon. Now he saw no face, but an elegant form receding in the crowd. It was attired from neck to heel in a clinging fawn waterproof cloak. What hat it wore he could not say, for a purple motor veil (purple beneath a dazzling arc-light) held it firmly, the end of the bow that was knotted beneath the chin, floating over the shoulders. As he looked the face looked back again with smiling invitation, and his heart beat a high tattoo on his ribs.

His feet became reluctant to take him forward, and to ease them he took them to the curb-side, letting his eyes rove backward after the figure in fawn. Distinctly he saw it look back again; and then make its way to a gaily-lit window. His feet moved that way, slowly at first, then swiftly at last.

What occupied the fawn figure, he saw, was a boot-shop. To the right it stood, surveying footwear. He moved over to the other window and surveyed footwear constructed for stouter purpose. His

rebellious eye, looking down a sidelong glance, saw a profile that inclined to classic with something of the urgency of gothic. He saw, too, crisped locks of hair that had escaped from the purple prison to lend glorious remoteness to a cheek across which there leapt flickering smiles.

He had been accosted by, yea, and had accosted, wayworn ladies of the streets. But his eye judged this to be a different matter.

Presently the figure left the window, and came past him to resume its walk. He turned half-about, in time to see a face that smiled swiftly and mischievously at him. Long lashes had gone quickly up to disclose two eyes that smiled in concert with the face—smiling at him, directly at him—and then drooped again. Swiftly he sped after the figure, and rejoined it on its far side.

"Good evening," said he.

"Good evening," she replied. "I wondered if you were coming."

He strode on beside her with wild blood. Torment was in him. They two might have had the whole world to themselves for all he knew to the contrary.

"Won't you take my arm?" he said, extending a comely bend for her to place her requested member in.

Her reply was the deed.

"You live down here, I needn't ask," said she. Her voice was musical, with a certain strain in it telling him that its owner was not unacquainted with the foot-lights.

"No, I don't, as a point of fact," he replied. "I live at Chelsea. But I felt restless, so out I came!"

They trod on in silence, her arm in his. Neither spoke for awhile. He looked down at her, and saw that she smiled mischievously at him. He saw, too,

that she was exceedingly beautiful, with rather the beauty of form than the beauty of spirit. Her beauty was no shy product of the hills, of sunsets or twilight. It was radiant to endure the ordeals of footlights. It was not brazen; it was far from being brazen or ruthless. It had its own essential spirit. Yet it was not a theme for poet; it was rather a theme for songster. Nevertheless Harry, who was not unlearned in the things of life, disassociated it entirely from meretricious wooing for lucre. This charm of hers seemed to him rather the revelry of mischief, the glory of abandon.

A side turning loomed like a dark pit before them, with far trees showing dark branches against a dark wet sky. He suggested that they should turn down thither, and she assented.

"Where are we going to?" she asked, when a short way down the turning in question. As she asked, she stopped and faced about.

Dim figures of the distant Rose floated before his eyes; and convicted his present position as evil. He was disturbed; he was unhappy; but a strange turmoil was in his blood.

"I don't know," he said. "Let's go and have a glass of wine somewhere."

"I seldom drink, strange to say," she said; rather, she seemed half to sing it, such was the lilt she gave it.

"Then a cup of coffee?" he suggested.

She looked up at him from drooping eyelashes, and with the same flickering smile she said—

"I'm in business here, you know."

"Business?" he said, mystified, scenes of drapery waving before his eyes.

"Yes, my dear boy, business."

"What business?" he asked.

"Oh, well, I needn't go into details, need I?" she said. Her voice seemed to laugh, but failed of mirth.

He looked on her; and comprehension leapt swiftly on him.

"Oh!" he said.

### VIII

THEY stood facing each other; and excitement was riotous in him. All his pent passion of emotion roared through him, becoming almost too much for him to contain. His brain reeled.

"Shall we go and have a glass of wine now, anyway?" he said, more to say something than from any hope to accomplish anything.

"I never drink, really," she said. "It's no use our standing here like this, is it?" she added, with laughter in her voice.

"No, I suppose it isn't," he said.

"My flat's not far from here," she said. "Will you come?"

"Very well," he assented.

Harry shut moral eyes to consequences, and went beside her. There are some moods that defy the psychologist; and his was one of them. He was borne forward on a wave that seemed to wake from nowhere. Through streets that seemed ill-lit by comparison with the lavish splendour of the High Street they trod. He had slipped his arm about her waist; but, though she had lodged no protest, her manner had evinced aversion to such public display of amorousness, and therefore he had removed it from that shapely resting-place to place it within her arm.

"I didn't think you were that sort," said he, euphemistically referring to his discovery of her vocation.

"Nasty shock, I suppose," she said; and there was a touch of the bitter in her voice.

"No; I don't know," he said stoutly. "I don't suppose you took it up for choice."

"Not a word, not a word, not a word to the great Grandee," she sang softly beside him.

He tried once or twice to collect his thoughts, for there was a voice that spoke uncomfortable urgency through him. But it was a fruitless task. With each failure he had more and more to relinquish effort, and to resign himself to the flood that bore him forward.

"Haven't we arrived yet?" he asked, seeking to assert a defensive expostulation.

"My dear, we're there," she said.

They stood before a large red-brick building that towered heavenward. Its upper portion disappeared into night, making night yet more dark. Its lower portion took some shape and outline; and that the whole was indeed constructed from red-brick could be guessed from the fact that the light which an adjacent street-lamp threw on some portion of its base showed the walls to be of that hue. One only of its numerous windows was lit, gleaming like the malignant eye of a Polyphemus before Ulysses wrought his mischief on it.

She led the way up ill-lit stairs; and finally producing a purse to get her key thereout, she stopped before the door of her flat.

"Here we are, you see!" she said, stepping firmly in before him, and switching on all the lights. "I hate gloominess, don't you? Plenty of light for me, though my deeds are evil." She laughed again; a silvery musical laugh, though he thought he could catch again in it that touch of the bitter.

He stood in the centre of a well-furnished room,

watching her as she divested herself of her veil, hat and cloak. Her costume, he could see, was elegant, but showed signs of wear. She smiled at him as she removed her hat, displaying a well-crisped head of hair taking firmly back to a well-ordered cluster of curls.

"Well, curious," she said, with a smart nod of her head, "do you approve of me?"

"You're passable," he replied.

Next it came to the turn of her gloves, and when these were divested she came over to him, and taking his face in her hands she regarded him steadily awhile. She waved back the hair from his forehead, still contemplating him earnestly.

"Yes," she said, "you're a handsome man, you know."

He laughed out. Nevertheless he glowed with satisfaction.

"Am I?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, leaning toward him with pursed lips.

He caught her to him and kissed her passionately over and over again. Lying in his arms, then, she looked up at him, humming a tune. Presently she reached forth a hand, and giving him a smart slap on the cheek, she broke away, pirouetting about the room, singing—

"And she came from the uttermost heaven, she did,  
On a rainbow of purest light,  
To the peak of a mountain high she slid,  
And made the whole earth bright."

"Do you know that song?" she broke off, eyeing him with sidelong mischief, one foot half thrust forward, and one foot bent with her weight, her whole body in a balance of arrested motion.

"No, I don't," he said, smiling. "Go on with it."

"My dear boy," she said, abandoning her pose, and coming over to him; "I can't sing to order, can I?" She pinched his forearm severely as she spoke, grimacing as she did so.

"Why not?" he laughed. "Aren't I worthy of it?"

"Well, you deserve it for that," she said, and pinched him again. "I believe I shall give you another verse, shall I?"

"Do!" said he.

"Then I will," and almost before he could follow her movements she was swinging about the room again, singing—

"To the margent of a mountain pool  
With fluttering steps she came,  
But touching its brackish waters cool  
She fled in a sheet of flame."

"Where's that from?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh, a thing I was in once." She spoke listlessly.

"But who is it about?"

"Me!" she said radiantly, striking her two hands on her breast, and then, seizing his wrists and dancing about him, she sang again—

"Her name was Theodora, and she  
Was a fairy of high renown:  
The sunrise gave her its mystery,  
The sunset a golden gown."

"That's the first verse," she said, still dancing about him. "And, my dear boy, I was Theodora. That's what they sang about me. You wouldn't think it, would you? Theodora in a London flat, ah me!" The last sentence was spoken sadly, with a touch of the old bitterness.

A deep pathos seized on Harry as he regarded her.



Seating himself in a chair beside the fire that leapt in the grate, he drew her to his knee.

"Now don't be serious," she said, seeing the gravity come over his face. She rested her hands on his shoulders, and regarded him steadily. "Nothing serious," she said again, with a nod.

He drew her to him again and kissed her. She threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, it seemed, with equal passion.

"I like you," she said, extricating herself.

"I like you," he replied, drawing her to him again, while their lips met in a long kiss.

"I oughtn't to," he said presently, holding her from him.

"Why not?" she said, frowning at him.

"Because I've got a girl," he said, avoiding her glance, and fumbling with his words. "I am engaged, that's to say, and I'm waiting to get married."

"Oh, are you?" She looked at him with deepening disapproval.

"You don't like it," he said.

"I don't see what it has got to do with me," she replied, with a toss of her head. She sat still on his knee, but her manner was one of constraint and coldness.

"But you don't like it," he said. A strange feeling of pity came over him; and putting his arms about her waist he attempted to draw her to him. But she would not.

"My dear boy, *I* don't mind," she said. "I've got my living to get, and this needn't interfere. Only," she added, with more than a touch of bitterness, "all the fellows I've ever liked have got girls or wives or something of that kind." She broke to a snatch of a wild song; but breaking off quickly she added abruptly, "I'm Theodora in a London flat, you see!"

A great gust of pity swept on Harry. Her light reference to her manner of life moved him inexpressibly. He said—

“What made you take up this kind of a life?”

She looked down at him haughtily, as though to fend off an undesirable subject. She said—

“My dear boy, one’s got to live.”

“But I thought you were on the stage once.”

“Ah! One can’t always get situations for the asking. And then what has one to do? Starve? Well, none of us like that.”

He was puzzled. But the deepest pity was on him, and he went on—

“But have you tried to get into a shop?” He felt, to do him justice, as he spoke, that he was scarcely saying a very courageous thing in asking her to sell her soul instead of her body.

“Oh, my dear boy”—she laughed her silvery laughter—“that’s not very much better. A good many of them are on the game, too. Not that I didn’t try. I did. One doesn’t do this sort of thing first go off, my love. But you can’t get jobs for the asking, you know.”

He looked disconsolate. He drew her to him, and kissed her on the forehead. She kissed his cheek with a quick motion, like a bird’s peck.

“What funny people some of you men are! You keep on asking us to leave this kind of life, and yet you come to us.” Her words stabbed Harry. “I tell you what!” She sprang from his knee, and stood before him. “You get me a position, and I’ll give this up. That’s a bargain. Though I don’t promise to give my boy up.”

“Your boy!” Harry felt suddenly and unaccountably jealous.

"Yes, my boy. He's in Paris, having a very gay time, I suppose. I don't mind, though. I don't care very much for him, but his money's as good as other people's. I wish I could get somebody I cared for. But everybody I like has got somebody else."

"Nobody cares for me,  
Nobody cares for me,  
I'm a poor little waif by the wayside,  
And nobody cares for me."

She sang this to a popular tune of the streets, aping dejection before him with that humour which is all tears. Then she broke away again, and started swinging about the room, singing the same words to a jaunty jig.

Harry felt moved to tears as he watched her. He felt a deep tragedy in her very effort at abandoned mirth. He longed to be able to aid her; but was helpless.

With that suddenness that was characteristic of her she stopped her song and dance. She ran up to him, and taking his hand, said—

"Come along!"

He sprang to his feet.

"No, no! Don't ask me!" he cried. "I mayn't, I can't." He stood with his hand in hers, fiercely regarding her.

"Oh!" She looked deeply disappointed. "Am I so horrid?"

"Oh, not that! Only you see I may not. Don't tempt me!" As he pleaded, he drew her to him, and kissed her passionately. It gave him strange relief.

She regarded him pathetically. Then she tossed her head defiantly and said—

"But you'll come to see me again?"

"Yes; I promise you I will." He spoke as though in firm reliance on himself.

"And, dear," she said hesitatingly; "you don't mind my asking you, have you got a present for me? Oh, I am horrid for asking you. But still, what am I to do? I'm very hard up."

He drew forth two sovereigns, hardly earned money; and held them on the palm of his hand before her.

"There you are," said he, "take one or both. I'd rather you took only one, for I'm very hard up myself. Still—you choose."

She took both; and regarded him. She looked at the sovereigns, then at him again. Hurriedly she returned one.

"Put it away quickly," she said, "or I'll take it. But you will come to see me again?"

"I promise," said he, as she came up to him for a kiss.

It was over half-an-hour later before he finally went. And when he did so, it was with the pressure of her kisses on his lips, the memory of her face shining before his eyes, and her name, Gwendoline Farrer, in his ears.

When he arrived home a letter from Battersby awaited him. It ran thus—

"MY DEAR DENZIL,

"Prythee call on our Advertising Manager to-morrow at noon, will you? He wants a high-spirited, good-looking and affable man; and of course I said you were he. There's money in it, man! I have spoken for you. Act up to my adjectives, and you get it.

"Ever yours,

"HUGH BATTERSBY.

"P. S.—My motto for the occasion is: 'Nothing is, but thinking makes it so.' It's either derived, or not. In the one case it speaks for my erudition: in the other for my originality. But in either case, think on't!

"H. B."

## IX

IT is the morning light that tests and tries the quality of an emotion. It may perhaps be said that the emotion that is as rich of hue, as varied in charm, by the cold light of morn as it seemed to be in the dark of night, has thereby passed indissolubly into the constitution of its possessor, and is to be reckoned a factor in all subsequent business of his life.

When Harry awoke next morning recollection's infiltration to his mind was slow. When it came, however, he sprang from bed with a cry. Going over to his large portrait of Rose he regarded it sadly, contemplatively. Words came to his lips, in the natural soliloquy of pent and perplexed emotion. "Rose, Rose," he murmured, addressing the irresponsive cardboard, "I love you, God knows I love you. You made life for me. That other girl's nothing. Whatever made me do that I don't know; but I was faithful to you."

His thought told him that such of faithfulness as he had achieved was but a mere matter of carnal fact; that in truth he had forsworn allegiance of heart, the deeper faithfulness. But he answered his thought with as meet intricacy. He said that the deeps of his being were true to Rose, that only its surface had been touched by a new passing wind of emotion. He sounded on stronger perplexities. "Must I forswear

all pity, even love, such love as makes life great, for the innumerable mass of women, because I owe fealty to one, the fealty of joy and truth?" He found himself no answer, and laid the portrait on its stand, still regarding it.

"Perhaps I should have accepted your offer to come to me," he said again in spoken soliloquy; "then we both could have helped this girl. Oh Heaven, what lives some women live!" Thus he touched one of the impossible desires of a masculine large wave of emotion that in its catholicity breaks on certain irremovable rocks. Had indeed Rose been with him, and yet this have occurred (an unlikely contingency for him, it must be confessed), he might peradventure have essayed this. But it would have been to venture an un-navigable passage.

"What lives some women live!" This sang through him as he dressed. Not unversed in introspective dissection, he nevertheless did not know that it is through such pity disastrous infatuations are begot. "Gwendoline Farrer!" he murmured, smitten with reflection in the midst of pulling hose over cold toes. Melancholy held him. Even the rigours of a cold bath had failed to dismiss it; which bespoke a lamentable state of soul. "Gwendoline Farrer!" He wondered by what pass one bearing that name had come to her manner of life. His mind railed on at a harsh world that created "misfortunates," and then spurned the product they had so produced. He determined he would not be of their number. He would visit Miss Gwendoline Farrer even as he might any other lady of his acquaintance. "I would visit a milliner," he muttered; "that is if I knew her. And if Society offered ten shillings a week to Gwen (so he had addressed her the previous evening) as a milliner, and ten pounds a week as the other

thing, then it should respect her for accepting its own preference. At any rate, it's no business of mine how she earns her living."

So he fenced his dubious conscience. But he was not best happy as he wrote his letter to Rose, with her portrait before him as was his usual habit—for he found love the more idealized for a tangible symbol.

Even the business of the day could not dismiss his melancholy. It absorbed, obsessed him. But the business of the day demanded acquittal, nevertheless.

He called on the Advertising Manager at the *Daily Urgent* at the prompt hour of noon, and found him surprisingly agreeable. He felt even a personal sense of indebtedness to the man for his kindliness and courtesy. He had not met much of this. Harry glowed with satisfaction.

"Ah, sit down, Mr. Denzil," said he. "Battersby's been talking to me about you. He even came down here in the morning to do so, which says you must have inspired him incalculably. Good chap, Battersby!"

"Splendid! He's been a good friend to me," said Harry, with enthusiasm that feared to speak too strongly.

"Well; and he spoke very well of you too. You'll wonder why I want to see a literary man like you about a business matter."

"I must admit I did wonder. It's scarcely in my line."

"Well, it's a new idea of mine, and needs explaining. I want you to regard it as a literary affair. I even propose to observe the literary distinction of not making an exclusive demand on your time. Naturally, if this pays you better than reviewing books, you'll do more of this and less of the other. On the other hand, I shall reserve the literary privilege of transferring

your work to somebody else if your work is not up to what is, in my opinion, par."

This was said so graciously and affably that Harry was interested. The other went on—

"I wish literary articles, written in a literary way, on rising industries and ventures. It will be a capital and most insidious advertisement for them, especially if the articles have an entirely literary wit and flavour; and it will also suit us, for we shall charge fifty per cent. more for them than for ordinary advertisements. It will all depend on how the articles are written. I have seen some of your work, Mr. Denzil, and I think your aid will be of mutual advantage to us. In fact, I should be prepared to be liberal with terms."

He waited for Harry to reply. Harry spoke reflectively.

"In other words, the public would read what it thought to be a paid essay, but what it really would be reading would be a carefully doctored advertisement."

A smile passed over the face of the other, for he had been warned against Harry's moral analyses by Battersby. He addressed himself to a problem that he had already thought over.

"No, it doesn't bear that interpretation, even remotely. The public will enjoy the pleasure of your writing, for we would encourage, we even desire, the literary value of the 'personal note.' It will further be advantaged by having put before it a genuine industry that needs encouragement. For instance, here are two that would be worth looking up." He produced a couple of cards, and handed them over to Harry.

In short, Harry left the office not long thereafter, having agreed to terms that relieved him of all immediate anxiety if only some success met him. To put



this to the test he had taken the two cards, and determined to call at the addresses designated thereon that very day. The enthusiasm of novelty glowed in him.

At the first of the two addresses he received short shrift, being treated with such offensive contumely that he entered a luncheon resort in the City in a hot mood.

"I'm as good as they, confound them!" he muttered. "Why can't some brutes learn the commonplace decency of manners."

After lunch, however, his heat had declined considerably, and he determined to carry out his relinquished decision of visiting the second of the two addresses.

Here he entered a most sumptuous building. Mahogany panelling and a casual flunkey greeted him in its porch. He found the room that contained the firm he sought on a lofty floor, and approached by devious alleys made by walnut-wood and crinkled glass. When he entered he was accosted by a clerk, one of a number that seemed to find a heavy leisure best tricked away by subtle games of draughts beneath half-open desk doors. There had been a rapid shutting of desks as he had entered. He stated his business, said he wished to see the principal, and was at length shown into a luxuriously fitted apartment in which an elegant man sat reading a newspaper.

"You wished to see me about advertising, I understand," said the stranger.

"Yes," said Harry, and plunged at once into an explanation of the scheme that had been propounded to him earlier that day. "You see," he concluded, "the advantage of this is, that it has no appearance of an advertisement. And we ensure the quality of disinterestedness by making some selection among the firms

that wish us to treat them in this way. So you create an objective and detached aroma that should be extremely valuable." Once in it, Harry attacked the matter enthusiastically. Moreover, he was not habituated to the subtle arts and devices of solicitation, and therefore his manner was that of equality, and his tone that of authority.

The stranger was obviously interested. Something about the proposal had fastened his attention. He was a large, expansive man, with a Gallic-Hebraic countenance. He wore a neatly trimmed beard, that was aspersed with grey. His forehead was deeply furrowed. His nose had effected a mild compromise between Roman bony aquilinity and the Hebraic fleshy droop. It started the former, but concluded with the latter. His hair, where not grey, was glossy black. Colour flushed his face; but that his skin was olive was unmistakably manifested by his long hands.

"I am very deeply interested," he said. "I think this is just the kind of thing that would be useful to us. You write, you say; may I see some of your writing?"

Harry handed him a paper in which an article of his appeared, somewhat awkwardly. This commercial inspection of his work wounded him. He heard the door of the office outside open and close. At this the other jumped up.

"That's my partner," said he. "It's most fortunate he should be here, for he seldom comes up. He has the major part of the capital interest, you see; and we always consult one another about an outlay of money. I'll go and bring him."

"I'm afraid I haven't the pleasure of your name," said Harry, as he passed him.

"True, true; you haven't. My name is Barras, Gerald Barras." He gave it the French pronuncia-

tion. "My partner's name is Colquhoun, Richard Webber-Colquhoun."

The name communicated nothing to Harry, and he sat peacefully awaiting the re-entry of his late interlocutor, thinking himself fortunate to have met with so hearty a reception. When Mr. Barras re-entered with his partner, Harry saw that the newcomer was a man of upright mien, slight of build and foppishly elegant of attire. He was clean shaven; and the hair on his temples was iron-grey—prematurely, for his well-groomed locks were untainted elsewhere.

There was something about the two men that Harry did not like. Barras was objectionably sleek, he thought, particularly in his manner to his partner. Moreover, there was a strange light of cunning in his eyes. As for Webber-Colquhoun, there was a hard, calculating look in his face. His manner was supercilious; and Harry felt at first a curiously sensitive fear of him. He very deliberately, rudely even, looked over Harry from heel to crown, and seemed a little mollified after the examination. Harry flushed somewhat at the treatment; noticing which, the other lifted his eyebrows slightly in surprise, and turned his eyes away. To Harry he seemed a man that did not propose to let his emotions easily run away with him: one who held a cheap regard towards his fellow-beings on this earth.

"Well, Barras, what's the proposal?" he said, in rather a harsh, unpleasant voice.

"Rather a good one, I think," replied Barras. "Mr. —"

"Denzil," interposed Harry.

"Mr. Denzil here represents the *Daily Urgent*, and is an essayist of some repute." Harry felt somewhat perplexed, but did not lose his composure. "His paper

is interested in our proposal, and he has come on their behalf to offer us column-space at an abnormally cheap rate for the exploitation of our claim. Of course, advertisements of a development like ours are very difficult to achieve. But this proposal meets the very difficulty. For Mr. Denzil's intention is to put them in the form of literary essays. He'll be our Hazlitt, in fact. It seemed to me that one such column for each of the next two weeks, and two such columns on the subsequent two weeks would, with the other irons I have in the fire, ensure us a premium at flotation in spite of the fact that the boom is decaying."

"It's a good idea, don't you think?" said his partner looking over at him.

"It's an admirable idea. It couldn't fail to help us. An ordinary, or an obvious, advertisement would do us more harm than good."

"You haven't got any of your writing on you, I suppose," said Webber-Colquhoun to Harry. "It all depends on that."

For the second time Harry blushed as he handed over his paper. He blushed a deeper hue when it was handed back to him with the laconic comment—

"Not at all so bad!"

They went then into a discussion of ways and means, and Harry noticed that while Barras prompted most of the notions with Gallic fire, it was Webber-Colquhoun that developed them in his frigid calculating way. He seemed to understand the relation of cause and effect pretty accurately in this event, but he struck Harry as being of extraordinarily limited intelligence outside the question of Hard Cash. Barras, despite his crafty shrewdness, seemed a man of altogether finer intelligence. He seemed to have a most subtle perception of the effect of certain policies on the public

mind. He worked the invisible emotions, in fact, while Webber-Colquhoun paid heed to digitary calculations.

"You'd do well to take up shares yourself, Mr. Denzil," said Barras, with enthusiasm.

"Alas!" said Harry expressively.

"I see," said Barras. "That's unfortunate for you. I tell you what I'll do. I'll give you ten fully-paid ordinary—they'll be issued at ten pounds—and I dare say my partner will do the same if at allotment they stand at a premium of fifty per cent."

"With a letter to that effect if need be," added his partner loftily, at which Barras looked annoyed.

Harry left the office presently, with an appointment to dine with the two of them up West the following evening. To say that he was dazed was to state his condition of mind with a mild figure. He began sceptically to look out for disaster. The thing seemed unnatural.

When he had gone Barras said to his partner—

"Just the very thing, at the present moment. I think he'll do us some good. It's no use disguising the fact that this present tendency to slump in oils won't do us any good. Our tip is to get out of it as soon as possible."

"I suppose, Barras, there's not much oil there, as a matter of fact."

"Well, I'm a mining expert, and I say there is, which is all that concerns us at the present moment. No man can be sure of anything. Besides, we've got these two other men."

"I was asking your private opinion."

"I haven't got any private opinion." Barras's manner was bland and sleek, in contrast to his partner's supercilious quiet. "The present concern is rather, seeing this tendency to slump, to begin our 'bull' anew."

We should, I think, find it wise to clear out between allotment and settlement." He laughed easily.

"Yep!" said the other shortly. "You're watching things carefully, I hope, because I can't be bothered being much here."

"Oh, you trust me! There's nothing much to do now except to watch and manœuvre. We shouldn't lose anything for the sake of a few pounds just now."

"Oh, I'll pay up. Only let me know what I'm doing."

"It was a bit foolish, that offer of a letter to Denzil."

"Perhaps it was. I thought of it just as I said it. In any case, it'll stop him rounding on us after, if anything went wrong."

## X

WHEN Harry achieved his room that evening he found the following letter awaiting him—

"MY DEAR HAL!

"You see we're quite good friends, aren't we? Don't forget your promise to come and see me again. I'm in most afternoons, and out most evenings. Let me know if you're coming on an evening, and I'll stay in. I am always in to dinner between 6.30 and 7.30 anyway.

"Oh, my dear Hal, this is a terrible life we poor girls live! It's the devil's job when the devil drives. I am looking forward to seeing you again. I like you. Oh, why couldn't you be my boy, instead of having a horrid girl of your own? I've got the blues to-day.

"Your—loving, is it?

"GWEN."

He remembered he had given her his address. He stuffed the letter in his pocket, and turned to some reviewing work he had, to find something that a perplexity could fasten on so as to save the endless gyrations of thought that wearied the mind and made no further progress towards clarity. Later, however, he surreptitiously drew it forth and re-read it. Its perfume excited him. Before turning to perplexed slumbers he read it yet once again.

The following evening he dined with Webber-Colquhoun and Barras. The former seemed now somewhat more cordially disposed towards him, while the latter seemed considerably more reserved. They had, as it were, come in from their separate poles to a common centre of interest. They almost sought him. This made Harry instinctively hold aloof. In this way they all attained more of an equal stature than when they had spoken last.

Business was severely avoided while dinner was in progress. Barras showed himself of a considerable versatility of opinion on a wide range of subject. Webber-Colquhoun was chiefly silent. When the dishes were cleared, and the perfume of cigars rose as incense from the three of them, Barras turned to his partner and said—

"I think we're fairly agreed about this proposal."

"I think so!" said the other.

Turning then to Harry he said—

"It's now only a question of price. I think your price is exorbitant." This was said with a curious drawing together of the eyelids that gave Barras a sinister appearance.

Harry was puzzled. Wine and elation was in him, however, and he answered loftily—

"It's unalterable, at any rate."

There was silence for a moment, and then Barras resumed his blandness, saying—

"Oh, well, I don't suppose we'll quarrel about that. We wish to raise no obstacles. But as a set-off against that we should, of course, require the *Daily Urgent* to make it a matter of recommendation. They'd do that, I presume."

"I don't know. That's scarcely in my province."

"We should, of course, put the papers before you, Mr. Denzil. In fact, I have them here with me, copies of the originals, that is to say. Apart from the expert opinion, which is of high value, there is, of course, the fact that Mr. Webber-Colquhoun is the leading spirit in this. His name is a considerable guarantee in itself." Webber-Colquhoun had his eyes fixed on his partner with a hard frown, but the other went on firmly and imperturbably: "I should be obliged if you took the papers with you, and got the first article in hand as soon as possible. If you would just kindly look over these papers, Mr. Denzil——"

Harry endeavoured to follow Mr. Barras through the wilderness of figures, estimates and guarantees. But his mind, gently rocked under the influence of an ancient wine that had come floating to him with all the fragrance and sunlight of the plains of France, a wine that had got its sunlit distillation of rare value from a jocund summer of years ago, refused to do battle with mundanity. Barras' silkiest tones poured out by his ears, while Harry's thoughts floated through succulent vineyards escorted by the subtle nymphs that had been bottled for so long in crude green glass. No forked pine had held these dainty Ariels; but stout corks and gilt foil, rather. Now they were away over far fields, having been unloosed by broad-shirted Prosperos, and Harry's thoughts were with them.



His eyes regarded the several papers that were put before him, and his subconscious cerebration ejaculated fit monosyllables in fit and proper places while Barras' monologue proceeded. But his mind dwelt and hunted with the chivalric knights of France. His thoughts soared serenely and contentedly through a spacious and beautiful universe.

It was not to be wondered therefore that the following morning he found it necessary, a little shamefacedly, to make a visit into the City in order that Mr. Barras' ingenuity might anew lead his somewhat quicker, more agile, thoughts through the tortuous maze of topographical charm and mining intricacy. Yet he had thereby lost what ascendancy and independence he had had, and he was, therefore, the more disposed to echo Mr. Barras' subtle intentions in the columns of the *Daily Urgent*.

Little he thought, however, that while this was proceeding Rose was receiving no less than an invitation to marriage from a quarter unknown to him.

## XI

THE southwester was laden with boisterous invigoration. On the promenade, beneath the mounded cliffs of Winmouth, it bore sharp salt spray in its breath. The thud and break of mountainous waves filled the air with noise of combat. Great clouds came, borne up over the blue heavens; and the sun shone fitfully, these weighty galleons on the deeps of heaven obscuring its radiant visage ever and anon.

Far away to the horizon could be seen white steeds in revelry and chase, one upon another through the hissing waters. They came sweeping along to do battle with the verdant monster that baffled them. They did no more than thud on his shingly toes. He laughed back defiance at them. Yet still they came, and knew not what it was to learn defeat. And their master, the great southwester, cracked his airy whip in their ears. Stung by him they burst their anger, and then with snarl of rage receded beneath their urgent newcomers. And as the sun broke radiantly or was obscured in gloom, the defiant green cliffs laughed in mockery or scowled in sullen wrath.

A good number had been won down to witness the tumult of the waves; and among them was Rose. She found wild fascination in watching these form-flecked steeds, breaking before her, or surging illimitably over the deeps. The scene called to something in her, and gave her strange joy in beholding. She was kin with it, but found the activity of her soul restricted by sympathy with it. Had one of those riotous waves a soul, a mind, a cognizance and wit, gladly would she have taken such a life to live to the full!

She had been much perplexed on Harry's behalf. Her sensitive soul had detected a faint shade that had passed over the lyric ardency of his letters; and she knew not to what to attribute it. And she had come down here not to think it out, but to let the thought resolve itself as she gazed upon a scene that called mutual sympathy to her.

So she leant on the rail of the promenade contemplating the scene before her, when an unpleasant voice sounded in her ear—

"Ah! I've been looking for you, Mrs. Foggetty!"

She turned to behold the form and visage of Mr.

Bevis Urquhart. She was silent with distaste and dismay.

"Nice little scene, isn't it? But these aren't what I call waves. A typhoon is the occasion to see waves—real waves." Among the attributes that he displayed for her hatred of him was a disparagement of whatever scene was present before him in the interests of some hypothetical scene as yet, and probably never to be, beheld by her. She hated his physical breadth and stature; but she hated even more this experiential immensity of his.

She put her hands behind her to grip the rail on which she had leant, while she surveyed his obnoxious figure. An overwhelming desire flushed through her to strike him. It seemed the only way to be quit of him; and more than so, it seemed the only fit expression of her attitude of nameless fear of him. With utmost difficulty she desisted. Her thoughts refused to frame to words.

He, no whit abashed by the manifest repugnance before him, proceeded to further speech. The objection of others to the course he might propose on their mutual behalf had ever been a matter of small concern to him. The world, to him, was a contest of will on will, with the issue to the stronger, which, he won intelligence to know, was frequently synonymous with the more weighty and implacable.

"Do you mind accompanying me this way?" he said, and pointed westward.

"I must be getting back," she said, with more insistence than firmness. "Back" meant to her eastward, and was therefore a haven.

"But I wish to speak to you on a most urgent matter," said he calmly.

"Can't you speak here?" said she.

"Hardly," he replied.

"I really must get back now," she said. Her manner was hostile.

His reply was half to turn westward with a slight bow. Having accomplished this, he stood so, waiting. There are certain responses of obligation between unit and unit of a sociable state. He gained the advantage of discovering his, and standing patiently to her to fulfil hers. Her response in kind would have been to slap his cheek then and there. It would have regained the social equilibrium, and then they twain could have gone their ways equal and therefore free.

But she felt obligation tug at her.

"You're most rude," said she, as she stepped by him.

"I'm sorry you think that," he said. "You will scarcely think that, I hope, when I have concluded what I wished to say."

She waited for him to begin, but he showed no disposition to do so. She stole a glance up at him; but his countenance was as immobile as ever. He trod firmly beside her, silently, magnificently. She felt overawed by this immense calm of his. It stifled her rebelliousness, and hushed her irritation.

"You wished to speak to me about something," she said, not thinking of making a guess at his mission.

"Wait till we are further ahead," said he, waving his hand forward.

Then he lapsed again into majesty of silence, and again she went beside him wondering at him. It seemed as futile to resist him as to waken heat in Arctic snows. Certainly it defied natural means and methods.

Suddenly he turned upon her and said—

"Mrs. Foggetty, I wish to marry you."

The blow fell on her from a blue sky. They were now far away from the populace, and none were nigh to witness his declaration. It had been given with surprising force, causing her to stop.

"I beg your pardon," said she.

"It indeed is so," he said. "I have long had this desire, but have questioned the expediency of it to me. You see, I have long been accustomed to my own ways, to the enjoyment of an unbroken liberty. Then again, my means, which are ample for the enjoyment of a single man, are scarcely what you might call opulency for a married man. These, you can quite see, are serious considerations for a man in my position. But I have been greatly attracted by you; I must admit it. From the very first day we met I have thought you quite charming. In short, I feel I must make you mine. It would give me great pride to make you my very own. When can I come up and speak with Mr. Bradley on the subject? I assume he will be in this afternoon."

Rose heard this dispassionate weighing of the balances to discover which side the true self-interest lay, with growing impatience, an impatience that manifested itself by the tearing of a handkerchief inside her muff. When he had concluded, she broke out with a sharp quiver in her voice—

"Are you aware that I'm engaged?"

He looked on her from above, with a shade of annoyance on his face.

"There's no occasion for temper, I think," he said.

It was this trick of his of leaning forth to handle her own bridle; magisterially, mightily, to withhold her steed from being spurred to a splendid gallop, that baffled her. But she denied baffling.

"Mr. Urquhart!" said she.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Were you not aware that I was engaged to Mr. Denzil?"

"I had heard something of Mr. Denzil being a very close friend of yours."

"Did you not know I am to marry him as soon as we can manage it?"

"Oh, yes; indeed I had knowledge of it. But that was only your intention before this offer of mine."

"Do you honestly mean to tell me, Mr. Urquhart, that you expected me to consider your offer?" This man disconcerted her.

"I beg your pardon." His surprise was lofty.

"Do you actually mean me to consider your offer as really meant?"

"Assuredly. I insist that it has received my most careful consideration. I cannot insist too strongly on this."

"I assure you you need not either."

"I beg your pardon."

"Mr. Urquhart, you seem to assume that there is no such thing as love, because, I suppose, it is so utterly foreign to your nature. Allow me to inform you then that there is such a thing as repugnance."

"I don't understand you, I fear."

"I mean this, that I am engaged to marry Mr. Denzil because I love him, because he in poverty would be infinitely preferable to me than Adonis with the wealth of Cræsus——"

"Admirable!"

"It may be admirable, and it may not. But I won't waste my time explaining these finer issues to one so obtuse to them as yourself. Let me inform you of a cruder fact. If I did not propose to marry Mr. Denzil because I loved him I should yet despise you be-

cause I loathe your very presence. You are obnoxious to me."

"Again I say, Mrs. Foggetty, there's no occasion to be rude."

"It seems the only way I can reach you."

"I understand, then, I must postpone my offer."

Rose gazed at him as at an incomprehensible mystery. She flew to doubt his reason, though she need not have journeyed further than to doubt his susceptibility.

"Postpone it? Why, I tell you I despise you!"

"Then I will wait to remake my offer subsequently. In the meantime, let me tell you I have carefully weighed the matter, and there is little likelihood of my changing my mind. It's merely a question of now or later."

They had stood facing one another during this dialogue; and as he spoke he turned half-about, waiting for her to join him for their walk back. She stood still, gazing at him with white set lips. He was like one of the dark billows before them, and she the white soft gull beneath it—but with the softness set to rigour, sternly to withstand the onslaught.

"Let us turn back, Mrs. Foggetty," said he.

"You go on. I'll wait, and follow later," she said.

"I would wish you to come with me," he said.

"I would rather not," she replied.

"You have been rude enough already, it seems to me," he said, "without your adding this further discourtesy to the list. I am bound to assume that you are not altogether remote to the claims of common politeness, and therefore I request you to accompany me back even as you chose to accompany me here."

He buffeted her, she felt. It was as though he took her, and cuffed her into obedience; and though she

resented the treatment with a whole tingling blood and with jangling nerves, she felt beaten to submission.

"I believe I shall strike you one of these days," she said, as she turned in to walk with him. "Kindly don't speak to me," she added, as he begun to thrust the barque of conversation on to the seas of reminiscence. But it was unavailing; he would not be gain-said; and therefore she contented herself with not hearing him—or rather, with not distinguishing what he said any more than she sought to distinguish wave from wave in the roar that boomed along the beach.

When home she flew to inform Mr. Bradley of the indignity done her. She was not wont to seek his advice much these days, confiding rather in herself. She could not tell whence the change came, whether from him or from a growth in her. Yet so it was; and she had shrunk from seeking him overmuch. But now indignation quivered in her, and she rushed to her old confidence and faith in him whom she termed father more truly than ever she had known the utterance of that name.

"So it has come, has it?" he said, and smiled.

"Did you know it would come?" She was amazed, astonished.

"Well, I thought it not unlikely, I must say." He seemed somewhat amused, though he sought to disguise this, seeing her agitation.

"And yet you permitted us to know the obnoxious man? Father!"

"Well, you two, you and Harry, have got to prove yourselves, haven't you?" His manner was firmly testful. She snuffed from afar part of the reason why she had lost touch with him. She asked sympathy; he gave philosophy. His was no self-centred philosophy; it was genuinely sympathetic, and couched in the



interest of their eventual faith in each other: nevertheless, it was age presenting its wisdom to youth, and rebuffing youth thereby. He went on: "If you can't stand a few buffets, dear girl, it's perhaps a poor look-out for afterwards. The same of him. You're both of you ultra-sensitive, and want your edges blunted a little."

"Oh, no; no!" she cried out.

"Well?" he asked.

"That's just what we don't want. Why should all the colour of life go, just because you think grey wears better? We want colour. I want colour. Life is colour."

"Then, my dear girl, have your colour. Only *be* colour; don't paint." He regarded her uncomprehending attention awhile. "Paint chips off; if the very fabric of a thing is colour then it lasts. There's something chipped off you to-day." He was silent awhile again, that this might infiltrate and be saturated. "For my part, I prefer grey, but I admit it's accepting failure. Life chipped off all my paint, and I like a plain workaday world. If you're going in for the bigger thing, do so! But let it be one or the other. That's preaching, isn't it?"

"Yes, father!"

"Well, even that's good o' Sunday mornings," he said, and smiled.

She let the effect of pedagogy pass on the wind, then said—

"You're not going to let him call again?"

"Not if you wish it. You would do better to face it out with him, I think." Half-intelligently he was endeavouring to persuade her to recognize the actualities of existence. He saw that they pricked her into far space. The romance her soul craved for

floated in aery blue of heaven, instead of having broad roots expanding in brown earth, and thence achieving to transcendental heights.

But she shrank from him as from another actuality to be faced. She left the room. Nevertheless, his sage counsel was a reproof to her. It taunted her, she thought, with insincerity. She forebore telling Harry anything of the strange wooing she had received.

## XII

HARRY had sturdily resisted the siren voice that sang in his brain tempting him to a certain flat in Kensington. Over a week had passed, and he began to conceive of himself as another St. Anthony, having won through frailty to probity. An urgent epistle of entreaty had almost vanquished him; almost, but not quite.

Then he received the following letter—

“MY DEAR MR. DENZIL,

“So you are just like the others; no different. And what a loss for me, because I thought you were kind and nice. I thought you were sorry for me, just for me. But, you see, you weren't, were you? You all, all you men, try and push a girl further down the hill when perhaps a *pal* would help her.

“I may tell you, dear boy, that I've tried for two positions this week. And, of course, they wouldn't have me. When I told them where I lived, that was quite enough for one of them. The other started *asking*, but I wasn't going to have the two things mixed up, and so there was an end of that.

"Why won't you come round and help me? Are you so good, and I so bad? Because you were kind to me before. Come round to-morrow night; I shall wait for you. I had almost a mind to call for you to-day. Come now; and don't fail me!

"Your very sinful,

"GWEN."

Pity and tenderness gushed in him. Besides, thought he, I shall not fail as I nearly did before, and here is a real chance of giving a bit of kindly aid. Indignation at the social conditions that had sentenced this girl to her manner of life, and then ostracized her because she had obeyed its dictates, waxed hot in him. "I'll go," he muttered: "it's enough that everybody should avoid her without my joining their cowardly number. I'll go, and we'll have a chat together."

Having come to this resolve, he drew out a multiplicity of papers that had been supplied him by Barras and Webber-Colquhoun, reached down a couple of new tomes on geology (in the pages of which were white slips, in evidence of his studious progress, and the fortunate stages discovered thereupon) and sat down to the writing of his fourth article in praise of the new oil development company. The subject was working in his mind like the higher things of imaginative truth. The creative spirit moved in him. These details about him were but data out of which he constructed a larger and more potent theme. Strange bricks had been given him; and the zest in his own labours was erecting a structure of winning beauty out of them. The advertising manager of the *Daily Urgent* was half enchanted, half in trepidation at the articles. The editor had been perturbed. But Messrs. Barras and Webber-Colquhoun were swelled

to the limits of satisfaction: particularly Barras, who washed his hands in air after a sufficient perusal of them. He had seen each before printing, and though he had discovered matters in them that he would have wished away, yet he knew human nature, and was not disposed to ruffle a flowing imagination. He suffered them.

That evening Harry trod bravely round to make a call on Miss Gwendoline Farrer. She received him joyfully.

"So you have come," sang she. "You're just a dear boy. I knew you would."

Harry was abashed, not knowing what to reply. Now that she stood before his eyes, it seemed more clear to his thought that he had come rather for herself than for her aid. He accepted it at that, but found it difficult to express it so to her.

"Well, I had to, after your letter, hadn't I?" They were treading an ill-lit passage. He forebore passing his arm about her, though the thought to do so whelmed him.

"So that was all!" she said. She leant against him, and her glance travelled his face. "You didn't want to see me, then—Harry?"

He did not reply.

"Did you?" she asked again, and passed her arm within his.

"Of course I did," said he. "But I oughtn't to," he added.

"Oh!" she murmured.

Leaving him she fled into a further room, to greet his arrival boisterously, with a ring in her voice of that irony he recognized so clearly. It surprised him to think how vividly his memory had retained the smallest impressions of her.

"Well, and how's your girl?" she cried out.

"Oh, she's well, thanks," he said, seeking to turn the edge of her remark.

"Heard from her to-day?" she asked again persistently.

"Yes."

"You get a letter from her every day?" She withheld him from her with a chair interposed betwixt them while she pressed her questions.

"Yes." He watched her closely as a fencer might an urgent rival.

"And you write every day?"

"Yes."

"Oh, she's a lucky girl." She left the chair that she had held abruptly between them, and turned with a weary gesture to regard the burning coals. "I haven't heard from my boy for over a week."

"But I thought you didn't like him," he said, going over to her.

"No, nor do I. But it's the next best thing." She sighed. Her manner was listless.

He took her hand, and caressed it.

"I'm sorry for you," he said.

"Oh, sorrow's cheap." Her face was averted from his intent gaze. Her profile, lit by the warm glow of the fire, was surprisingly beautiful.

"But it doesn't matter about me, does it?" she said, looking round at him. As she looked she saw in his face what her quick divination judged to be the weariness of uninterest, so, slapping his cheek smartly, she sprang away, saying: "Oh, you silly old mopey boy, do let's be gay! you're making me quite melancholy. So your girl's quite well, is she? Got a photograph of her?"

His hand half travelled to his breast pocket, but stopped halfway.

"No, I haven't," said he.

"Oh!" she said coldly—and turning to the sideboard she extracted a box of chocolates. "I won't ask you to have any," she said, as she helped herself to some.

"Gwen, what have I done?" he said, going over to her, and laying a hand on her shoulder. His manner was shamefaced.

"You know," she said, looking up at him coldly.

"Well, I thought perhaps she wouldn't like it." He spoke awkwardly.

"Let me see it!" She stretched out her hand imperiously.

He extracted a leather case from his pocket, and held it hesitatingly in his hand.

"You needn't show it me if you think I'm not a respectable member of society," she said, and there was a quaver in her voice.

He held it toward her. Opening it, she gazed on the tinted photograph that lay within it. She scrutinized it coldly, keenly. Then swiftly she shot past him with it, and stood before a further mirror regarding herself. Then she held up the portrait beside her own face, and Harry could see her eyes in the mirror glancing quickly to and fro from the reflection of herself to the reflection of the portrait.

"Harry, here!" she called him

He went over to her. As he did so her left hand went up, feeling for the arrival of his face.

"Look!" she said, and pressed his face against hers.

He looked, but could see no more than the juxtaposition of the reflection of two faces, one in large,

and the other in small. He did not like the propinquity. It irked him. He looked away. Looking back again, he saw that her gaze was on him in the mirror. He looked eagerly into her eyes, and let his eyes travel over the reflection of her face. He forgot the likeness that was still being held beside his face.

"Take it!" she said, and held him back his portrait. There was triumph in her voice. It said that she had found nothing in it to be afraid or jealous of, and his ear caught this tone in it.

Facing him then, she linked her fingers in his, and thrusting him back upon a capacious chair, she bent him down into it. Retaining possession of her hands he drew her after him. Laying her face against his, she hugged fiercely.

"Oh, you are a dear boy," said she.

"Am I?" he whispered, his arms about her, and furious blood in his veins.

She drew closer and yet closer to him. Then suddenly she burst away. Dragging another chair to a position opposite the hearth, she sat herself in it.

"Let's do Darby and Joan!" she said, and then began crooning softly, with an extended digit waving the time solemnly—

"Darby, dear, we are old and gray,  
And the summer's passing another way."

"No, that's not it, is it, my dear?" she added, and laughed out merrily.

"Come here!" he said commandingly.

She mocked at him.

"We're playing at being married," said she. "I *may* play at it, I suppose. This is our home. Now, Darby, old man, what would you like for your sup-

per? Because you'll just have to get it ready for yourself."

He stroked his thigh contemplatively; looked at it, and then looked at her.

"Why, my dear boy, you never do that when you're married," she laughed.

He jumped up, and strode over to her. She fled him, mocking him from the other side of the table.

"Gwen," he called, "come to me!"

"I'm going to get supper," she replied. "Will you come with me, Darby?" She danced and tripped about the remote end of the table in mockery of him.

"Right!" And thus off they went for that purpose.

It seemed unaccountably, mystically strange to Harry, assisting this girl in those domestic services that his mind inevitably associated with the upkeep of a home, and which his imagination had faced as the inevitable condition of the early days of the domestic venture which he nursed for the future prospect of his hopes. Even to the numerous interruptions arising from the transient interest of caresses, tender salutations and embraces, it all went the way his imagination had conjured for his future. The fact sat like a gloom on his mind. He was glad when the preparations were concluded, and they sat at their meal.

Her eyes were upon him as they sat so in participation of supper.

"What are you thinking of?" asked he, seeing reflection stirring in the deeps of her eyes.

"Not quite so much like Theodora in a London flat, is it?" Her manner was quieter, and a soft smile played about her lips, like the ripple waked on a pool by a fish at play beneath. Recollection was at stir within her, and a strange hunger possessed her.

"Isn't it?" he said, quite simply. "I'm glad."



"No, you don't make me feel like—like—you know, like I am really, I suppose." She seemed a little awkward; strangely so. "You're different to everybody else. They all make me feel like—like I really am. You don't, you make me think myself quite a human being again. And that's why I like you so much."

"I'm glad," he said again, with quiet simplicity. Yet as he looked on her face, smitten as it was with strange reflection, a quick eager look came into his eyes, and he turned them away so that she should not see it.

The meal over, she flung herself on the sofa, and called him to her.

"Don't!" he cried, looking away. He dared not let her see his eyes.

"Harry!" she called softly, "come and sit down here, there's room for you." She moved further over.

"No," he said, with quick, short breathing. "Let's go and sit as we were sitting before. Come!" He held out his hand for her, glancing hastily over her. Tension was demonstrable in every lineament.

She took his hand, and tugged him down to her. He pulled reluctantly away, but she persisted until he was upon her, when she quickly put her arms about his neck, kissing him passionately. Quivering in every limb he pressed a kiss down upon her lips, till they were nearly breathless from it.

Then he sprang away with a cry.

"I must go. Gwen, I must go. I've got to get back." His back was toward her, and an ague seemed to have seized his limbs, such was the tension in which he held himself.

She sprang after him.

"Harry! dear! don't go! Why should you? There's no need. Let's play at Darby and Joan right through."

He went quickly away from her, toward his coat, which on his arrival, he had flung over a further chair. She clung to his arm, her face pressed against the sleeve of his coat.

"Harry!" she called, and there was laughter in her voice.

He looked down upon her, to see her eyes and face quick with merriment. He attempted to draw his arm away from her, and the agitation that worked in him moved a shadow over his face.

"Harry," she said, with gentle waves of mirth rippling through her words, "I believe you're afraid of me Me! Poor me! Oh, Harry!" She looked up at him with laughing face.

"I must go," said he firmly, more master of himself now. "Don't keep me, Gwen, I've got a lot of work to do."

Her eye travelled slowly over to the timepiece, that pointed the hour as toward midnight, and laughed a low sly laugh. He could not but laugh, too, to see his excuse so ruthlessly exposed.

"Then if I let you go, will you promise to come and see me again?"

"Yes."

She looked up at him through half-closed eyes, with a slow smile.

"How do I know you will?" she asked.

"I have said I will," said he, with attempt at dignity.

"Oh! but you weren't coming before, though you promised."

He looked guilt-conscious.

"I will, Gwen. I really promise I will," he protested.

She stood before him, still smiling inscrutably.

"Come!" said she, "let's have one more kiss, a long one."

She put her arms about his neck, and he bent over her firmly and with strength. She clung to him with closed eyes.

"Harry!" she whispered, freeing herself awhile.

Releasing her violently, and picking up hat and stick, he fled from the flat, and down the stairs.

Outside the house, he stood, looking up at the light that indicated the room he lately had been in. The night was dark and still about him. He trembled, and it was evident that conflicts broke through his mind. A muttered exclamation escaped his lips; and he forthwith fled down the street, running with fury of speed. He stopped not till he reached Chelsea.

Miss Gwendoline Farrer had witnessed his escape with amazement. Then she laughed merrily.

"Oh, what funny things men are!" she exclaimed, flinging herself into the large chair. She sat musing on woman's natural aptitudes for conquest over the lords of creation. "But I like Harry," she exclaimed. "I must have him, I think I *could* love him; I really think so." She stood up, and her eye fell on Harry's coat. "Oh, he has left his coat," she declared, kneeling on the chair she had sat in, her chin resting on its back. She noticed that it was different to the one he had worn before: better. "He'll have to come back sooner or later, at any rate, for I won't send it," she exclaimed, as she danced about the room. Then, flinging herself carelessly on the piano-stool, she began to vamp cheap airs.

## XIII

"It seems we have struck oil." It was Mr. Gerald Barras that spoke. He was standing in his partner's room, astride, before the fire, reading the last of Harry's articles.

Mr. Richard Webber-Colquhoun looked up from a society paper that he had been idly scanning, with quick intentness at the speaker's face to see if he had a double meaning with his words. It was an extremely dubious matter how much oil the eventual possessors of their scrip would strike. To Mr. Webber-Colquhoun, however, it was one thing to achieve this happy device for the coining of wealth, it was quite another to joke on it. It was indelicate. But his scrutiny of Barras' face left him with the conviction that the phrase was merely unfortunate. He said—

"What's the position of affairs this morning? Have you rung up Edgar's?"

"A hundred per cent., my dear chap, and two days to allotment. We're well over-subscribed, but Edgar thinks it just as well to let it go on. I have five others asking allotment on my behalf. You alright?"

Webber-Colquhoun nodded. Discussion of this subject he was averse to.

"Of course, it's partly, or even largely, the recrudescence of the boom. But still, to be fair, we owe a lot to these articles of Denzil's. They're just admirable. They've been talked about in the City. For all we know they may have brought the boom back again. By Jove! I think I'll double my presentation to him. Will you?"

"I'm game if you are."

"Done! We'll write a letter to-day." He spoke with the air of a man that sought to burn bridges behind him while the charitable mood flushed over him.

Barras called in a pale damsel and dictated the letter. Then he turned to a re-perusal of the article, presumably to keep his mood of generosity at the point of heat. His partner meanwhile was gazing uninterestedly out of the window across at an office opposite, over an interposing pit structured to let in requisite light, where a bald head with a pathetic grey fringe about it was patiently bent over a portentous volume, in direction of ancient fingers holding a pen. He watched this picture with a morbid interest. Thoughts of Harry flitted through his brain. Harry, this ancient drudge and he, had a strangely significant grouping in his mind that he could not find an intellectual relation for. It perplexed him.

"I like this chap Denzil," he said suddenly, still watching the old man. "When do we see him next?"

"In three days' time, day after allotment. We dine with him, you know, to give him his scrip."

"Oh, yes. I think I'll get him to come up to my place. He's a decent chap, I think."

Harry was surprised the following morning to get the letter jointly signed by Barras and Webber-Colquhoun. It made him uneasy. It seemed to him that he must have rendered them too signal a favour. If this was so, it seemed to follow with a strange and disquieting logic that he must have served Truth somewhat ill. The consequences of his articles made him uneasy; their possible consequences made him alarmed and apprehensive. A curious letter from Webber-Colquhoun in accompaniment, thanking him for his articles and reminding him of the appointment to dine

with them, seemed, however, to put a personal construction on it, and it quieted him.

There was also a letter from Gwen. He had twice been up to see her so as to recover his overcoat. Attributing his former weakness to the hours of darkness he had chosen the early afternoon for these visits. But she had been out on both occasions. On the latter of the two occasions, however, he had been accosted by a gaunt charwoman, structured solely of bone and ineradicably dirty skin, with unnatural hair and mutely indignant eyes. This gloomy specimen of femininity had disclaimed knowledge of the internal economy of the flat, and refused to come to Harry's aid. He protested his former waste visit, but to no avail. By her means, nevertheless, Gwen had come to learn of his visits.

She had written him several times, and had had letters in return expressing solicitude on her behalf, but no visits. The combat gave her a keen zest, however. It pricked her to conquest. She was free of the irritation of possible failure, for had she not the final tactical advantage of being in possession of his best overcoat? It won her to patience, for patience meant the prolongation of this zest.

He had determined to avoid her presence. It seemed his only safety. Let it not be imagined that it was easy for him. It meant sometimes a torture of conflict. But he used his portrait of Rose for talisman, and it came into use with perilous frequency. This present letter from the taunting charmer, however, bade him know, with sundry deft mockeries, that if he wished his garment he would need to go over for it. He determined, if need be, heroically to forego the garment.

He threw on the overcoat of lesser value, because of

greater antiquity, and sallied round to seek Battersby's advice. That gentleman hailed him with glee.

"Haven't seen you for the deuce of a time. That's not to say I haven't read you. In fact, you're the admiration of the office."

Harry found it strangely difficult to speak of his innocent visits in the capacity of a chivalric knight to a damsel in distress. It seemed easy over his own breakfast table, which at least is a token of his desire for honesty. But the very aspect of Battersby struck cross-lights of meaning over his purity of intention. It was liable to misconstruction. He would not speak of it. He said therefore—

"What do you think of them?" referring to the articles.

"Great stuff! You've made fiction of them. It'll be the devil's own humour if it fails to fulfil expectations. You'll be the most run-after man in London. One or two may blame you, but you'll be a made man."

"I only thought of it in that light to-day," said Harry, with knit brows, "and it rather worried me. I shan't know what to do if it's all false."

"False? Tosh! You've served ideal truth. You've made a Candida Oil Development Company in the heavens. 'Pon my word, it's a kind of Platonic achievement. I congratulate you. The vendors of the actual claim are nothing to you: their efforts are touched with mundaneity, soiled with failure, may be; yours is eternally perfect. If that isn't creation, well, then, creation's a meaningless word to me. You're an Artist, Denzil, with a capital Alpha."

"You're perilously near raillery, Battersby, old chap. I may tell you in extenuation of my deed that I'm genuinely concerned. I pushed on unthinkingly. Creator's zest, I suppose. But now I'm worried. I felt the

noose on my neck this morning." He felt it the more now because he could not find it in him to tell his friend what had brought revelation to him.

"Don't be!" replied the other. "You're alright. You should hear what some of the men in the office say about them. Got any more to do?"

"I've got another firm, yes. But I'll go more tenderly with that."

"And spoil your worth thereby."

"I'll chance that."

"Well, well! Anyway, enthusiasm's the salt of the earth, even though it be mistaken."

Harry caught the note of reproof in his friend's voice, and left feeling disturbed and unhappy. A radiant letter from Rose that morning added to his gloom. For it was in reply to one of his in which he had spoken of their marriage as a prospectively early event. She had written, too, in eager appreciation of his articles, which had been devoured with interest at Winmouth. It all seemed to him now as portentous of ill. His imagination caused it to swell to such dilation that it expunged the gaiety of the day.

He determined to go round and see his chief at the *Daily Urgent*.

This gentleman was sympathetically attentive to Harry. It was evident the matter had already engaged his thought. He saw Harry was distressed, however; and as it meant good business for him to keep Harry in clean power, he did not tell him that the Editor had sailed on him with broadsides of query only the evening before. He had a shrewd eye to eventual business, had this Advertising Manager of the *London Daily Urgent*, and therefore he sought to mollify Harry's wound, leaving the wound to be its own lesson for the future.



"Well, you wrote, having all the figures and details before you, on which you based your articles. I, too, investigated the material before you. It would be too foolish to expect more. If there's any mistake, the responsibility lies with the promoters."

"Yes," said Harry, "but it's all so much a question of colour. Just the very phrasing, the point of view taken, the selection of material, that's what makes writing, and that's what works the necessary influence on the reader's mind. By that test, the responsibility is mine."

"But you did your best. No man can do more."

Harry smiled.

"Yes, I did," said he. "That's rather just it. I sort of feel I shouldn't have put out my best. But, by that token, I shouldn't have taken it up at all. Yet, if one adopted that policy right through life, what would one do?"

"You look like finishing up with metaphysical fastidiousness."

"I do rather, don't I?"

"Besides, you're assuming that the Company's not worth it; a poor chance at the best. It may turn out a magnificent investment. Come to that, it's a poor job to be fastidious when it's Company promoting on the carpet."

"One is rather apt to look on the worst side of things. It's the delusions of life, I suppose."

"In fact, there's another oil boom on. Don't be morbid, Denzil. We want business." There was a touch of steel in his voice that braced Harry. It caused him to leave the office thinking no more of gloomy prognostications.

Nevertheless, when he met Barras and Webber-Colquhoun a few nights later for the anticipated din-

ner he determined to speak with them delicately on the subject. It would demand considerable finesse, and therefore he did no more than come to the decision, making no plans, determining to leave occasion to proffer the opportunity.

Barras greeted him with effusion; Webber-Colquhoun with a courtly attention that was infinitely more moving to Harry. The latter said as he greeted him—

"I'm afraid I'll have to do you the discourtesy of setting a time-limit to our table-cheer. I have to attend a most important reception this evening, and I must leave here at ten, not a moment later. But I would very much like you to come and see me at my place."

"Thanks; I should like to," said Harry. This man had repelled him at first; but now he caught himself moved by him in a curious way.

"Well, we'll make an arrangement to that end," said the other, leading his way into a gaily-lit room that murmured with the sound of voices, the necessary cadence being given to the chatter by a far musician that discoursed a violin Preislid to an inattentive people.

Having discovered their table, and being seated at it, Barras, with kingly ostentation, extracted a blue envelope from his pocket, and handed it to Harry, saying—

"I think you'll find that alright and shipshape, Mr. Denzil, in accordance with our two letters. Don't trouble to look through it now. If you wouldn't mind sending on a receipt for it in due course of time."

"I'm very much obliged to you both," said Harry, taking it. "I suppose the Company's alright."

"Subscribed three times over day before allotment,"

said Barras enthusiastically. "Each of those shares is worth twice its nominal value. But I suppose you've seen the prices."

"Well, to tell the truth, I haven't," said Harry.

"In any case," resumed the other; "there's no favour in our token of appreciation; we're very well pleased."

Then why, thought Harry, all this ostentation? He said—

"Well, I certainly put my best into it." His tone was that of banter, but he chose his words with eager care. "I hope the Company will turn out worth it. That's the worst of having a fastidious soul. If all my happy prognostications failed of their mark, I fear it would mean disaster for my sanity."

It seemed to Harry that Webber-Colquhoun did not best like the conversation. But Barras matched him.

"Admirable!" laughed he. "Admirable! Here are three of us, prospective candidates for an asylum; and all dependent on the caprice of mother Earth and a possible oleaginous soul for her. I hope she minds her responsibilities, and will not, therefore, rout the experts."

"What are the chances?" asked Harry, taking his mood.

"May I propound a problem?"

"Proceed!"

"What are the chances that two twos amount to four?"

"I catch your hint."

"Ah, I knew you would. Mother Earth says that her units are all dissimilar, and that, therefore, four is impossible of attainment. Is that not so?"

"And the application of the parable——"

"Is this! I see your face, and I say, a gentleman

and a genius." Harry bowed blandly. "It may indicate brutality and futility, so is life set with uncertainty. But I am prepared to bet otherwise. Similarly: I attend Earth's physiognomy; the book of her secrets is before me: I say, here is oil, here gold; it may be rock and barren clay, but I am prepared to bet otherwise. I have money in this; heavy money."

"Aren't we spoiling an excellent meal by indulging in shop?" said Webber-Colquhoun rather prosily.

"Are not excellent victuals a superb mundane accompaniment to heavenly banter?" said Harry gaily, caught to the mood.

"Superb!" laughed Barras. Then, seeing that his partner was not best pleased with the turn of the conversation, he added: "But our friend here would reply that commercial huckstering could never afford anything heavenly, banter or otherwise."

"And I would give the echo to his cheer," replied Harry again.

"Then, Mr. Denzil, you roll a new conversation into the field."

"What of the virtue of wine?" said Harry, toasting him.

"A perennial subject," replied Barras, in acknowledgment.

Webber-Colquhoun, however, did not seem so much disposed to float the heights, even though so happy a subject as wine was the occasion of it. Harry and Barras swept the blue in the gyratory and gambolling joy of flight, but their companion, who serenely trod the earth through the many courses of his meal, had a deterrent effect on their swift-winged joy. In his person the tug of earth overcame the attractions of the celestial blue. Silence captured them eventually, and they trod a pedestrian journey amid limbs of

cattle and pinions of feathered creatures. Barras' eyes were continually on Harry, however, and he noticed that once Harry had left the heights contumacious perplexities had again seized him. He regarded his partner, and wondered how he could fail to perceive the tactical advantage of strong wings.

Nevertheless, though he was now no longer able to fend inquiries by the use of a counter joy, this happy result was being achieved for him by the very theme of their late flights. The sylphic spirits resident in wine had him in charge, not immersing him in brutality, but floating him through contentment.

Webber-Colquhoun, however, was not one to forget the passing of time. He had long ago overcome, once for all, any tendency to lose firm foothold on substantial earth. The grey that strewed his forehead betokened that the lesson learnt had become, not only a fixed principle of life, but a natural habit of soul. Not wine nor comfort could keep that eye from wandering ever towards the timepiece on the further wall. And when its larger index swung over its smaller fellow in its course towards the zenith, he adjourned the meeting.

When Harry found the street he was little disposed for an immediate return to Chelsea. These floating masses of people made him a meet and excellent companionship. He trod with them. He passed down into Leicester Square. Stepping there, a siren hailed him. Rejecting her advances, he was about to pass on when he saw a blue-coated monster sweep down upon her. Turning, then, he offered her his arm and escorted her past the uncouth danger. Passed the zone of peril, he freed her with courtesy, and went his way with uplifted hat.

To and fro he passed. Then suddenly he sprang

up some stairs thinking to sit awhile over a liqueur in a lounge. A further cushioned alcove was empty, and he sat in it.

"A curaçao, please," he said to the inelegant attendant.

"And a lemon-squash, hot!" a silvery voice exclaimed.

A quick flutter of skirts, and a figure swept by the waiter, and flung itself beside him.

He turned eagerly about. Smiling mischief greeted him.

"Gwen!" he exclaimed.

"Harry!" came the response.

"What are you doing here?"

"No. What are *you* doing here?"

"Gwen, tell me! You're not up here——?" Questioning eyes filled up an awkward query.

"Precisely!" she nodded cheerily. "I told you, dear boy, when I first met you that I was in business. I'm not lazy, you see." She laughed in his face gaily.

"But you needn't." He looked at her. "What about—er—Paris?"

"Oh, he!" she laughed contemptuously. "I haven't heard from him for a week. Besides, if you're in for it, better play it right through!"

"I don't agree with you. I consider you married to him." Harry spoke solemnly, sententiously.

"What! Me married to him!" She laughed outright. "Oh, Harry, you're a dear old boy; but you're getting at me."

Harry was constrained to laugh. Their drinks were placed before them. He was about to buy chocolates and cigarettes for her, but her tug at his coat bade him desist.

"Don't be silly!" she whispered, looking over him.

"You've been feasting, Harry. You do look nice. It suits you." She surveyed him complacently.

"Gwen," said he; "I want you to go home."

"I don't like your coat, though," she went on. "I've seen better." She was quivering with mischief.

"To oblige me go home!"

"Tell me, what are you doing up here?"

"Companionship, I suppose." He shrugged.

"I suppose, my lord, you're the only one that wants that." She pinched his arm as she spoke.

This was a new light on the case. He had a point to gain, and he said sturdily—

"Oh, but it's different for me!"

"Harry, you horrid old Turk!"

"Yes, but I mean that I don't come up for anything else," he said, though it was the Turkish thought that had smitten him.

She smiled slowly on him.

"Oh, then you're too terribly good." She dismissed the subject.

"Gwen, I can't understand you." He looked in her eyes.

"Don't you?" She caressed the arm of his coat. "Poor old coat, you do look a bit shabby;" she addressed it musingly.

He looked down at her and laughed outright.

"Gwen," he said; "I like you."

"Strange!" she replied, looking in his eyes. "I like you."

The blood began to beat in his veins.

She proceeded with her drink; and he with his.

Presently he said—

"Gwen, I want you to go home."

"I will," she whispered, looking at him; "if you come with me."

"No."

"I've got my living to get," she said determinedly, setting herself back in the settee, and looking straight ahead of her.

"I'll give you as much as you're likely to get," he said, feeling himself unwontedly wealthy with these papers in his pocket.

"What about to-morrow, and the day after?" She turned her head toward him without coming any nearer, and spoke coolly.

He felt himself against an impenetrable wall. It baffled him almost to tears. He could not think clearly.

They were silent for awhile. Then briskly she slipped her arm into his, saying—

"You old goose, you've got to come and get your coat."

"I'm not going," he said, drawing her arm up against his nevertheless. Her affectionate action flushed him with a sense of luxury. He ordered another liqueur.

"Well then, let's sit here and chat," she said.

The hour drew towards midnight, and hilarity grew rife among the frequenters of the lounge. Deft bread pellets and fragments of biscuit, began to serve as prefaces to friendship, to the accompaniment of laughter and broad wit. One or two of the abler feminine wits began to wax witty about the facial misfortunes of some of the men. What the sallies of their victims lacked in pungency they achieved in force. That no enmity was implied was evident by the fact that some of the fiercest of the combatants would suddenly seal so remarkable an amity that, after a few whispered confidences, they would sally out and down the stairs together. In this way the company began to be



thinned. But what the residue lost in bulk it gained in boisterousness.

Gwen had slipped her hand down Harry's arm till it rested in his hand. He caressed it with his other hand. He felt as though he himself were being caressed by the large hand of a strange happiness.

"I ought to be going," he said at last, reluctantly.

"Well, good-bye, then! I'll stay," said she.

"Gwen, I want you to go home too," he said.

"It doesn't matter about me. You don't think I'm worth seeing home." There was bitterness in her voice; and, as he looked, there were tears in her eyes.

"It isn't that. You know it isn't that," he said.

"It doesn't matter," she said, and shrugged.

"And if I come with you, will you go home?"

"Yes," she said.

"I won't be able to come in."

"You don't think my poor flat's worth coming into."

"Not that! It's so late."

She looked at him stonily.

"You wish to stand at the door while I bring your coat to you?"

His eyes fell before hers.

"I won't be able to stay long then," he said.

He rose as he buttoned his coat. He felt conquest gathering round him, robbing him of effort.

Laughter and hilarity were dying down in the room when they made their way out of it. As he hailed a taxicab, and handed her into it, entering it after her, this impalpable, implacable sense of conquest brought strange quivers and tremors into his blood. When he sat back in the seat, he found her lips put up to his for a kiss. He pressed a fierce kiss upon them.

Early the following morning, as the milkmen made their clatter in the silent streets, between the neighbourhoods of Kensington and Chelsea there might have been seen a man walking hastily. Although he wore an overcoat he had another over his arm. It was evident he was in evening dress.

A grey chill dawn was creeping into the sky. A bar of silver cloud hung along the eastern horizon. Though the man strode quickly he stopped frequently, in muttered soliloquy.

Once he stopped so; and looking up at the rolling masses of grey cloud in the stupendous arch of heaven, gesticulated with his right arm. He seemed infinitely small beneath so vast a dome. If spirits hover in the air, those near him would have heard him say: "Oh, Rose; oh, Rose! if ever I loved you, it's now. God forgive me, but He knows that I never loved you as I do at this moment. I have wronged you, but you are all things to me."

They would have thought that perhaps he was addressing some deity of his. But they could not have failed to note the anguish in his voice.

#### XIV

"MOTHER, how's father?" It was Jim that spoke. He saw his mother writing, and he knew to whom she wrote.

"Shall I send him your love?"

"Is he still making a home for us?"

Question and reply went each past its fellow, despite the fact that it seemed not so. There are some subtleties of thought words are ill-fitted to convey. Rose knew the thought in her offspring's mind; and as it

voiced a conviction in her own soul that she had not put to deed, she sought to burke it.

"Yes, Jim, he's still making a home for us," she said kindly, but with something in her voice that endeavoured to silence him.

A long silence succeeded as Jim cogitated. Presently he said—

"Mother!"

"Well, Jim, what is it? I wish, dear, you wouldn't interrupt me so frequently."

Jim shrank up perceptibly, and made no reply.

"What was it, dear?" she asked him more softly.

"Mustn't he be cold at nights?" Jim asked then. He spoke as though he found it difficult to recover from the rebuff.

"Cold, dear? Why?" Her brow expressed perplexity.

"If he hasn't got a home," he said sensitively.

"Of course he's got somewhere to sleep," said she.

Silence supervened while she watched him with a perplexed smile on his face. He sat ruminating this statement. Evidently these elders used words with surprisingly difficult meanings to them.

"Then he's *got* a home," he exclaimed finally, as a ray of illumination struck through his mind.

"In that sense, yes," she said. She knew not why, but this interrogatory made her uncomfortable. It was as though the lad had reached behind superfluities, and laid his hand on the native raw of vitality.

Jim grappled with the sophisticated abuse of meanings. He made a quaint figure as he sat with his feet drawn up into a large chair. A book lay open in his lap, and his right hand lay in it. With his left he scratched his eyebrow with a sage old-fashioned air.

His mother watched him awhile sadly. This boy

with his sensitive aloofness was saturated with brooding cogitations. He distressed her. Even she herself seemed only to have touched the margin of him. At Mr. Bradley's injunction she had let him mature undisturbed by her fretfulness. The wisdom of this was patent to her. But it disturbed her not the less. She turned to her letter. Soon again his voice called her; this time with the soft breath of a whisper.

"Yes?" said she.

"You haven't——" A flush suffused his cheek, and he halted.

"Well, dear?"

"It doesn't matter."

"What was it, Jim?"

"Father and you haven't quarrelled, have you, mother?" He spoke diffidently, with a shrinking of manner.

"No, of course not! Whatever makes you think that?"

He made no reply.

"You mustn't think silly things like that," she said. "You'll understand all these things better when you grow up." She sought to rebuff him; his manner was almost ominous. It certainly distressed her, and made her uncomfortable.

As for Jim, this bait of coming wisdom did not tempt him. These were perplexities that he wished solved now. Either things had meanings or they had not. These elders seemed to rob his world of all purpose, his thought of all cogency. It was evident, however, that this subject was not welcome. It seemed that most of the subjects that engaged his thought had this unhappy quality. It was very strange. Nevertheless, the only thing to do was to seek for his own solutions, and this he endeavoured to do.

Though Rose turned to her letter she found it difficult to proceed with it. The disquietude her son had produced in her thwarted effort. It had been deep calling to deep, for she was kin with her offspring in her appreciation of the great simplicities. His voice woke a responsive chord in her. And its music made cacophony of the worldly wisdom of considerations. She seemed to herself like one who had forgotten her heavenly part in the confusion of the earthly comedy; and her son was her prompter. This very letter she wrote was a dalliance with unreality. What had she to do with the codified sloth of the ages, forbidding her to play her part in the great business of life? She was but a doll, writing eloquent phrases to him who did buffet on her account against adversity.

So her mind ran. For many months now this mood had grown in intensity, being lulled to sleep ever and anon by the friendships she had made in the town, and waking from its sleep but slowly. Her young mentor's prompting now woke it to intensity of life. It might also have been said that so earthly a cause as the winter sleepiness and monotony of the town was not absent in the effect it wrought.

She determined to have done with it. Briefly concluding her letter, she sought out Mr. Bradley. The sight of him made her proceed more circumspectly than her mood wished. But it was with ardency she said—

"Father, I'd like to do my Christmas shopping in London." To get to London was the first requisite.

"Well, that's not a bad idea," replied Mr. Bradley, folding up his paper, and putting it by. "Incidentally, to see Harry, too, I suppose."

"Isn't that a worthy wish?" she said, sitting on the arm of his chair, and putting her arm about him.

"Quite!" said he.

"Well, shall we go?"

"You think me a terrible old fogey, don't you?"

"No," said she. "I can't altogether understand you sometimes. But, then, I suppose you can't always understand me."

"Oh, yes, I understand you all right, because I've been there. You can't understand me because you've not been here." He rose up and took her two hands in his, looking down at her. "It's a good idea, my girl; we'll go up. More than that, we'll see if something can't be done to get you two spliced up. You've stood your test well, both of you. My philosophy's satisfied."

She gazed at him wonderingly.

"Yes," he said; "I'm going to be a fogey no longer. Besides," he laughed, "it's too much of a strain. I don't like it: especially when the Rose of the World begins to get estranged from me because of it."

Thus were the floodgates put aside to let the old tides of affections flow into their one-time channels. The resumption of the old habitual interchange of happy confidence seemed strange after these months of misunderstanding and aloofness. It baffled her with its very inrush of emotion. He noticed it.

"I wondered once if he would last," he added. "Not that I didn't think him an admirable fellow. But I haven't much faith in that way of bringing up a man. Perhaps I was wrong. Anyway, if I'm wrong it is Harry that has proved me wrong. Maybe, he was excellent in spite of his education. I don't know; only I'm very glad it's over. You *did* think me an old fogey, didn't you, now?"

The map of his intentions and thoughts began to unroll before her. The meaning of his lack of sym-

pathy, his apparent coldness, began to interpret itself to her.

"I didn't understand you, father," she said. "And I don't think I understand it now. Why should it be necessary to put people through trials?"

He flinched at the question. To dispute methods is to awake argument; to call their occasion into question is to deny the basis of dispute. He avoided the question.

"Now you'd better write and let Harry know," said he.

"No," said she exultantly; "that's what we won't do. We'll spring it on him as a surprise. I'll walk calmly in to see him, and enjoy the scene." High glee danced merrily in her voice. During these months there had been something almost surreptitious about her love. Now it was again a matter of open day.

If Mr. Bradley had shown the hesitancy of age in his desire that Harry should undergo his probationary period, he gave evidence of youth's resilient temper in the promptness with which he decided to put a decision into practice. For the following morning saw them being borne towards the great Metropolis.

Therefore twenty-four hours had scarce sped by since the thought had first impinged on Rose's mind when she might have been seen treading gaily through Chelsea towards Harry's rooms. That curious turn of mental gaiety that exults in mischievous ebullition was dominant in her. The corners of her mouth danced with inward laughter; so much so that she excited curious eyes without knowing of it.

Her first rebuff was to come on inquiring for Harry.

"He's not in, 'm," said the slattern maid that answered to her ring.

"Will he be long?" asked Rose. She had not

looked for this quite ordinary disappointment. It seemed to throw a shadow over her glee.

"I don't know, 'm," replied the loose-built domestic, looking at her with an irritating lack of ideas.

"Perhaps I'd better come in and wait," said Rose, since the initiative seemed to lie on her.

"I'll go and see," answered the uninventive servant; and fled.

The worthy matron in control of the household then appeared on the scene, to whom Rose again put the proposition that she should await Harry's return.

"Oh, certainly, yes; do!" said she. "You're Mr. Denzil's young lady, aren't you? There is a fire in his room. And I expect him back any minute now. He said he was only going out for lunch. Will you step up?"

Rose stepped up.

When she had last seen Harry's room it had still borne traces of its ancient state. That is to say, various pictures of a melancholy type had hung on its walls. She remembered one large lithograph that had adorned the space over Harry's bed, depicting Belshazzar's feast, and a valiant Daniel that was interpreting the blazoned letters to the confusion of the feasters. She had dim memories, too, of distant angels looming in one corner, which with the Menes and Tekels were the only touches of light in a somewhat gloomy general effect. Another picture over the fireplace had represented a delicate scene out of the Rape of Lucrece, with an obscure quotation from Shakespeare that, had it been legible, would doubtless have borne evidence of some passionate declaration by Superbus. Its improprieties had been toned down by sundry splashes of brown with which Time had bedaubed its distinctness. These were all gone; and



their supplanters bore evidence to the taste of the room's present inhabitant.

Having examined the room, and passed approval on it, Rose took a book and sat before the fire seeking thus to employ herself. But this gave small satisfaction, and so she took to wandering again.

She took her way to some work that Harry was at, that lay on his table. Reading it she saw it was a review of a historical work that lay beside it. She read so much of it as Harry had done. Finding that it had awakened her interest in its subject she bore the tome in question over to the fireside seat for more detailed examination.

A letter marked the page from which he had just extracted a quotation. She paid no heed to the letter at first, but let her attention rove over the text. Then she turned listlessly to the letter. As her eye fell on it, it was evident her interest sharpened. All listlessness passed from her as she turned it over to read it. A quick pallor passed over her face, and her features hardened. She read it; and re-read it. Then a groan broke from her.

With stern set face she put the letter in her purse, and gazed at the fire. Then, as the nervous tension overcame her, she jumped up and began agitatedly pacing the room.

This evidently attracted the attention of the worthy landlady. At any rate she soon put in an appearance.

"Mr. Denzil's longer than I thought he would be," said she. "Can I make you a cup of tea?"

"Oh, yes, thank you, if you wouldn't mind." Rose's manner was perturbed, and her speech disjointed.

"Very well; then I'll do that."

She was about to go when Rose, putting restraint

on herself, said as nonchalantly as she could—too nonchalantly for reality—

“Do you know where Mr. Denzil has gone? He didn’t say, I suppose.”

“I think I remember him saying somewhat about going to Mr. Battersby’s, but I wouldn’t be sure.”

“I suppose he is often at Battersby’s. But, then, of course, you would not know. Does he often stay with Mr. Battersby?—for the night, I mean?”

“Oh lor, no! He’s only been out one night for a long time now, and that was when he stayed with some gentlemen he went out to dinner with.”

“Oh, really! When was this?”

“About a week ago now.”

“I suppose he came back pretty late the following day.”

“Well, no, miss, that’s just what I laugh with him about. He came in with the milk.”

The good dame evidently saw a mirth in this that Rose strangely seemed to miss.

“Oh, did he?” she said. “Thank you, I will have some tea.”

When the unhappy slut, that was general accomplicher of unclean tasks in the establishment, brought her tea, Rose partook of it, but left the accompanying piece of cake. She then again read the letter that seemed to have caused the mischief, and took note of its date. Other letters, from Harry to her, followed suit. She compared the date and wording of these with the date and wording of the other; and as she did so a distant and obvious sneer passed over her face.

Replacing them, she sat to await Harry. By her clenched hands it was easy to see she had considerable difficulty in keeping control of herself. Now and then a tear would burst forth, and lie like a pearl on her

cheek. But these she brushed impatiently away. So she waited, without move or change of attitude.

## XV

HIS recent visit to Battersby had left Harry with the impression that in his urgency to live he had somewhat neglected the gentler amenities of friendship. Therefore, not knowing that Rose was at that very moment being borne to London, he determined to make good his fault. He discovered Battersby busy at the infinite labour of correcting proofs.

"When does it appear?" he asked, referring to the litter of paper.

"Heavens knows! When I can get through this ungodly task, or soon after; which is to say, at some remote unhappy date."

"But I'm interrupting you," said Harry. "You go on; I'll read here." He took up a book, and sitting comfortably in Battersby's favourite chair, began to fill his pipe.

"Interrupting? My dear man, you've provided me with the excuse my mind has been seeking this hour past. You'll find some quite praiseworthy claret over there behind my boots."

"Well, that's quite a notion." Harry went over and extracted it. "But in fair requital I'll give you a hand with those proofs."

"Do you mean it?"

"Down on the nail."

"My dear man, you're a heavenly angel! Any pangs of growth on your shoulder-blades, may I ask? I'm not, anyhow; and I mean to hold you to it."

"Perhaps you're fastidious, though; and want to

better your phrases. If so, don't mind telling me!"

"Now, Denzil, no shuffling! Just you sit down and get on with it. We'll work like men till lunch, and then away with these empty baubles. If you wouldn't mind handing me over my baccy. Thanks! Now for the claret. Good! So; right away! By the way, though; if you think any phrase wants bettering, then in the name of the Deity better it, and I'll think myself lucky." Which said, he applied himself again to his work.

Thus for over an hour there was nothing to be heard but the rustling of paper, and the softly muttered imprecations of irritation. Smoke ascended into the air in diminishing and disappearing strands; and the gurgle of the claret bottle aided the homeliness of the scene. It could have been noticed that Battersby threw himself at his work earnestly, and passed sheet after sheet over speedily without reference to his typescript. Harry, on the other hand, proceeded more slowly. His references to the typescript were many; as, too, were his alterations. Inasmuch as frequently after his alterations he stole a sly glance at his comrade, it might have been guessed that he was not innocent of interpolating Denzil for Battersby in matters of phraseology every now and then.

Punctually to time Battersby threw aside his work, and called loudly on Harry to do the same. He rang for lunch. When the charwoman he had, had laid the lunch, and left them to it, he said, assuming reference to her—

"What do you think of my latest importation?"

"They don't proceed from beauty to beauty," said Harry, for in truth she had scarcely been an appetizing layer of a meal.

"No," said Battersby reflectively; "they don't;

you're right there. They may though, you know. We may have inverse notions of beauty, she and I. I see her point of view. I don't accept it, but I'll concede its legitimacy from her standpoint, and save myself from intolerance. But what ungodly lives they lead!"

"Why did you get rid of your other?"

"H'm; yes; well! Rather awkward subject, old chap. She was a married woman, you know, same as this one is. Only this one, I should say, is sterile, while the other——"

"Wasn't!"

"Precisely! Put with your usual delicacy, old chap. Just to think of it, an ordinary fact of nature, a service to the state, and the benefactor loses twelve shillings a week besides her attendant disadvantages!"

After the meal Harry declared his intention of returning, as he had work to be accomplished. Battersby found small difficulty, however, in setting aside his intention.

They sat on thus, and let the wings of conversation lift them over the proverbial China and Peru of interest. Harry found Battersby's flippancy an admirable corrective. It gave its owner feather-feet with which to tread over the fragile ways of tender subjects. It gave him the entry to themes where the cynic and inveigher were ranked in inveterate hostility; and he came to cripple the cynic and to silence the inveigher. It flew to discover its prey through voids that refused to sustain heavier barbs. It played like lightning over subjects that challenged partisanship. Its anger was deadly but never furious; its pity was graceful but never maudlin. It admitted its limitations in that it refused greatness. It clung to the centre-ways of sanity.

Gwendoline had become an abiding theme in Harry's thought. After his night-long visit to her he had sworn hatred on her; but this had passed. She had written in tender memory of his visit, and he had replied offering her aid, but refusing to see her. Nevertheless, she continued in his thought. He had given up the idleness of denying that she had touched his infatuation, and he thought much of her future. The more he thought the more a deep, brooding, permanent melancholy laid hold of him, undermining his health of mind indeed, but bringing him withal nearer to the vital things of life, as he well saw and knew. The mention of Battersby's charwoman had roused all this in Harry's mind, and he therefore turned to his flippancy, fearfully, but firmly, as to the blade of surgery.

"Talking about your late household assistant," said he, "I suppose we project a good deal of suffering into them that they never experience."

"Of course," said Battersby. "It means a sudden change that wakes a good rollicking oath; and then they settle down to the new state of affairs."

"But," said Harry, "what about those who have quick sensations and a disastrous future to look forward to?"

The sequence lacked in Battersby's mind, and he declared roundly that he had lost the trail.

"Well, about those unhappy fellow-creatures of ours that haunt the purlieus of Piccadilly?" he asked. He spoke with an effort at flippancy that endeavoured not to reveal to his listener that he spoke of a personal matter.

"The perennial theme of melancholy to the young and morbid," Battersby pronounced, taking his pipe from his mouth to give additional weight to his words.

"To the quick and earnest, I suppose you mean."

"That presupposes an earnest point of view, and I'm not sure that that's always healthy. Earnestness, my excellent Denzil, is o'erapt to overweight its interest. At any rate, I sedulously avoid it."

The surgeon's blade made a deeper and more complete incision than Harry had thought it would. It lost its benefit for him thereby, for he refused to part with so much.

"Do you mean to say," he said, "that you have never thought over that tremendous problem?"

"We've had skirmishes," said Battersby; "but I thank God I've always won."

"You mean you've avoided it."

"Same thing."

"'Pon my word you're a strange chap, Battersby."

"That may very likely be. But problems find me often enough without my journeying the metropolis in search of them."

This was small aid to Harry, and he left presently with Battersby's injunction ringing in his ears bidding him forego chivalry as exhausting to the emotions. As he made his way back the prospects that Gwendoline Farrer had in her manner occupied his thought to the exclusion of all else.

It was in this morbid mood he entered his room, letting fall a cry of surprise as he saw Rose sitting by the firelight in the dusk of the room.

"Rose! You here! You never let me know you were coming!"

"We came up this morning."

Her voice was cold. She submitted to his embrace.

"We must have a light," said he, rattling a box of matches. "Doesn't it get dark soon?"

"No, don't let's have a light. I like it like this."

"Right ho! But it is a joy, dearie, to see you like this." When he had first come in melancholy thoughts concerning Miss Gwendoline Farrer had been at full flood in his mind, and consequently the sight of Rose had perturbed him. Now she was to him the coming of spring to winter, and he rejoiced in her presence.

"Is it?" she said.

"Yes, indeed," he said, placing a chair beside hers and drawing her hand into his. He thought her strangely cold.

"And how have you been getting on?" she asked, warming somewhat.

"My dear own sweetheart," said he, "you know as much about me as I do; or you ought to after my daily budgets."

"Do I?"

"Yes, of course you do, you silly old girlie." He found himself combating a strangeness in her.

"I didn't know."

He drew her to him for a kiss in reply. She submitted. It was no eager response. He scarcely even realized that an impalpable hand was thrusting him aloof from her. An awkward silence supervened. To relieve it she said—

"So you've been making money."

"Yes, dear; I'm quite a wealthy man now. We must get married at once." He murmured tender-  
nesses.

"You like these men?" she asked.

"Not altogether," he replied. "I've got hold of another thing now that I have personally more faith in."

"You dined with them, didn't you say?" she asked. He caught a strange insistence in her questions.

"Yes, dear," said he.



"Was that the night you didn't come home?"

The question stabbed him, and robbed him of his breath a moment. He thought he felt her hand quiver and throb in his, but could not know if this were she or himself.

"Yes." He laughed awkwardly. "I had too much wine, I fear; and so I went to stop at the Frenchman's hotel (I think he's a Frenchman, that is); he lives quite close there." Harry felt her hand stiffen and harden in his.

"Oh," said she, with almost a perceptible sneer.

"But who told you?" he asked.

"Your landlady just happened to mention it."

He felt no anathema towards that innocent matron. She was in no way concerned with this.

He grew suddenly apprehensive as to her coldness. Alarm ran startled through his brain.

"But why are you so strange, Rose?" he asked. "What's the matter? Tell me, dearie!"

"Nothing!" she replied. Her hand quivered now undeniably; so also did her voice betray quivering emotion. They were to him the indisputable trumpet-tongues of calamity.

"Rose," he cried; "something is the matter. What is it?"

She turned on him, and her voice was a challenge.

"You didn't stay at a hotel that night."

"Rose!" He sprang to his feet with a cry on the word. He stood looking down at her through the dark. "Rose," he said again; "what do you mean?"

"I mean what I say, Harry." Her voice was harsh; harsh with restrained emotion.

"Do you mean to suggest, Rose, that I am lying?"

"Do you give me your word that you were at that hotel that night?"

"Yes," he said doggedly, quaveringly.

"Oh," she said; and it was the cry of a wounded soul.

"That's to say——" he started.

"Well?" she asked, waiting, maybe hoping.

"Yes, I was at that hotel," he said doggedly again.

"Harry, you weren't." She rose with the accusation and there was indignation struggling through dire distress in every word.

"For God's sake, let's have a little light!" he cried, his nerves all on edge and a-quiver.

He struck a match; and as the lit gas threw its brilliance on the scene it showed her standing pale and tragic. Tears flowed steadily and slowly down her cheeks from out brimming eyes, and she made no effort to wipe them. His whole being gushed with sudden and deep pity for her, but her attitude challenged him to touch her.

He glanced hastily about the room, and saw the deranged table, the misplaced book. It was now his turn to cry aloud. Understanding leapt on him.

"Oh, Rose! Rose!" he cried.

"Well?" she said.

"I know how you found out. But I was faithful to you, Rose; faithful in my thought. I hated myself, and exalted you in it. And do now." His eye drooped before hers.

"And you lied to me." She spared him nothing. Her softness, gentleness, turned to flint. She seemed to him merciless.

He shuddered at that stroke; but he took it.

"Yes, and I lied to you. I lied to you. Though I exonerate myself in that now. I did it partly to save you pain. And in a sense it was true, for I hated the other thing."

She sat suddenly in her chair, and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed violently.

"Rose! Don't, dear! oh Rose!" he cried, dropping on his knees beside her, and putting his arms about her.

She suffered his comfort. He kissed her hair tenderly. She seemed shaken as though by a tempest. He had never seen sorrow like this. And to think that he had caused it! Convulsive shudders shook her, as she attempted to control herself.

"Don't, my darling! Oh, this wounds me, dear," he whispered.

Slowly she extricated herself from his caress, and distance began again to grow between them. He felt it coming, but was powerless to fend it. It oppressed him with a feeling of helplessness and despair.

She rose, and drawing off her engagement ring laid it on the mantelpiece, herself convulsed with sobs as she did so. It was to him as though a cold icy hand had reached from darkness, and struck him. His limbs seemed to lose the power of muscular action as he watched her. At length he found speech.

"Rose," he cried, "what does this mean?"

She turned on him for reply.

"Harry, I trusted you so; oh, I trusted you so!"

"And you did well to trust me, Rose. Before God, I tell you you have been the one absorbing topic of my mind. Can't you see that this thing is nothing, an incident?"

"That you should look at it like that makes it worse."

"Rose, my darling, you speak as a woman. I see your point; but can't you see mine?"

"No; I'm afraid I can't, Harry."

Futility, helplessness, wrapped them.

"And is this to be the end of all things, Rose?" he asked, a terrible hopelessness ringing in his voice.

"Yes, I think so." She was firmer now; but her voice quavered through its resolution.

He gazed on a ruined world. His eyes lost focus on his surroundings: her or the room. The significance of her words dazed him awhile, it came so suddenly. But he grew alive to it; and therewith came a great sorrow.

He burst unrestrainedly to tears. He fell on his knees, covering his face with his hands while great sobs shook him. It was to him as though the whole earth had suddenly lost significance and purpose; as though the goal for which he had striven had suddenly been shattered before his eyes; and his zest of life rolled on him, taunting him.

Quickly he found her arms about him, while she kissed his forehead, and breathed soft words by him. She laid her cheek beside his. Then she drew his head on her breast, and comforted him as she might a child. Hope revived in him.

"Then it's not all over, Rose?" Rising, he took her by the hands, and held her apart from him, looking down anxiously at her.

"Yes, yes," she whispered, drooping her eyes before him.

He let fall her hands.

"Then why did you comfort me so?"

She raised her eyes to his.

"Because you were in trouble, Harry."

"Oh, was that all?" he said, and there was bitterness in his voice.

Hearing it, she put up her hand as though to take his, but let it fall again. Silence held them.

"I must go, I must go," she said at last, shivering.

"And are we to part like this?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," she said, as though clinging to a resolve. He stood looking down at her.

"Will you kiss me, Harry?" Her face was put up to his.

"Don't mock me, Rose!" he said, turning away from her.

She went slowly across the room. At the door his voice hailed her.

"Yes?" she asked.

"You have a letter of mine, Rose," he said.

"I think I ought to keep it." Her hand was in her bag.

"Very well!"

## XVI

HE heard the front door open and close, and footsteps in the street without. He sat with a heavy sigh in the chair that had lately held her.

Presently his mouth began to twitch and draw to and fro, while tears coursed his cheeks. Reflection was at white heat of emotion in him.

"I insulted her. Good God, I know that: I insulted her," he cried out. He rose and strode about the room. "That's all it was. It wasn't unfaithfulness, it was an insult: a thing to be forgiven on apology. She's deliberately ruining two lives for a whim. For she knows I love her; she knows that, as I know she loves me. It's pride; that's all it is, pride, pride. Oh, why didn't I think of this while she was here!"

Time drew out without heed or reckoning by him. A knock fell on the door, and he gazed ardently into the fire while the maid laid dinner for him. When

she had gone, and he turned to his meal, he saw that there were some letters for him. Tossing them unopened on to his writing-table a familiar caligraphy caught his attention, and he drew out a letter from Gwendoline Farrer.

"Curse it! and curse her!" he cried, and flung it unopened across the room. It floated in a curve across the air; and, falling in the fire, went up the chimney in a sheet of flame.

Looking on his meal he turned in revulsion from it. With quick agitated movements he donned his coat, thrust on his hat, and went out.

With long strides he strode out he knew not whither. The single fact that he was now alone, with no goal to strike for, no comfort to turn to, no hope with which to be buoyed, began now to fall into a vaster scheme. It had hitherto been the one devastating thing that had held his mind. Now it faded awhile. But he knew that it was but linking itself with many other things for a yet more terrific assault. He could not, seemed not to be able to, fasten his attention on any one point of immediate sorrow. He endeavoured to ward off the pending host of attack.

Passers-by regarded him curiously as they heard him muttering to himself, or observed his gesticulations as he arrayed his case before an imaginary Rose. But he saw none, heeded none.

Presently his feet slackened, and he stopped and looked about him as though in recollection of something. Looking up he saw to the left of him in the night sky the golden haze of a shopping centre. Before him, over the smaller houses, rose a looming mass, a darker building on a dark sky. One or two lit windows relieved its gloom. Suddenly recollecting that this was the set of flats in which Gwendoline had

her lodgment, he turned sharply about and fled quickly down a side turning.

When he settled down into a walk again he found that walking had lost all zest: its potency to relieve his overwrought brain was strangely gone. So he turned and walked in a spiritless way back to Chelsea. Having arrived home he met inquiries as to his unfinished meal. He dismissed the question, and he dismissed its subject. Utter weariness came over him. Flinging himself into his chair he fell into a heavy sleep.

It was cold and dismal when he awoke. The clock indicated the small hours of the morning. He crept up through a still and silent household, and drew himself into his bed fully dressed even as he was, there to resume his interrupted sleep.

The following morning he had but a dim notion of calamity. When memory surged on him he sprang out with a cry of pain. A cold mist licked the window-pane. No man could well have been more cheerless and cold. He stood, upcalling before his blank gaze his hopeless position. He was alone now. He had given up all for her; and now she had given him up. The blame was his; he stood to it; but he called aloud that the lash he received was out of all proportion to the ill he had done. Still, be that as it may, the fact remained: he was alone. There had been a certain indefinable somewhat about Rose's manner that conveyed to his mind a sense of complete hopelessness. It seemed to his mind, despite its dogged and resolute texture, as if it were to court a further castigation of Fate to seek to alter this irremediable resolve.

Yet it was the worse evil to leave things as they were. Indeed, it was impossible. Therefore, while the day was yet young he journeyed round to the hotel

at which Br. Bradley was wont to stay when he came up to London. Here he learnt that, early though it was, Mr. Bradley, Mrs. Foggetty and child had already gone. No, they could not tell him what train they had proposed to catch. They could but say what they had said; they could but point to the irrefutable fact.

Strange though it was, this news did not depress Harry. It touched him to life as with a whip. He went quickly forth and springing into a taxicab he gave violent injunctions for speed to a certain large terminus. The sphinx-like driver turned no hair at this urgency, but coolly proceeded to do as he would ordinarily have done.

No! he could not discover them at the station; and as he learnt that a train to Winmouth had gone but half-an-hour since, it was obvious that they must have travelled by this. He clung to action as to a sacred medicine. He resolved to speed after them with the next train.

Thus an early winter's afternoon, chill, dismal and cheerless, saw grief-wrought Harry pacing nervously up and down opposite the house that contained his lost treasure. Little he knew that he had not been unobserved by her! Champing on the bit of fear he boldly drew to the house.

Yes, Rose was in; would he step in? Yes; he would; and did. Antique Alice bore no sign on her face that she knew of any trouble.

Yet it was not Rose that entered to him, but Mr. Bradley, with a face stern and severe, militant almost. It quailed Harry.

"Rose is too deeply troubled to see you, Mr. Denzil." The voice was cold and charged with reproof, and the familiar "Harry" was gone down the wind of



yesterday. It chilled his hearer. "I must admit myself surprised at your visit."

"But I must see Rose, Mr. Bradley; I must indeed. It's too terrible that this should go on."

Harry's cry rang to him. With the sight of his anguished face, it threw Mr. Bradley into perplexity as challenging his trite judgment.

"But——" he began, when Harry broke in violently—

"What right have you got to come in between us? You haven't, you know you haven't, Mr. Bradley; neither you nor anybody."

"But I don't understand you, you have me at a disadvantage. You seem to speak as though you were the one that has received an injury, not Rose."

"Oh, I know she is suffering. Isn't that the chief thing that is torturing me now? I can't get her face, as she looked at me yesterday, out of my mind. But it's her pride has done it. That's what is scourging both of us."

"Her pride!" Mr. Bradley's astonishment rose in his voice. "Her pride!"

"Yes. Oh, I could make it right in a few moments if I could only see her. How can I explain all this that I see now to an outsider? It's not decent."

Mr. Bradley looked at Harry for a few minutes, then went over and rang the bell. When Alice appeared he asked her to bid Rose come to him.

"She has gone out," said that domestic.

"Out!" exclaimed Mr. Bradley; and Harry echoed the word.

"Yes, sir, she went out a few minutes ago."

"Very well, Alice," said Mr. Bredlay; and when Alice had gone he turned and said to Harry: "There

you are, my boy; there's your answer; this time from Rose, not from an outsider."

"Oh, I didn't mean to hurt you, Mr. Bradley. But isn't this terrible? Isn't it terrible?" He sat down and bowed his head into his hands.

"I really find you very difficult to understand, I must say," said Mr. Bradley, looking down at him perplexedly, judgment on him and pity for him mingling strangely in his thought.

Harry made him no reply.

"I suppose," went on Mr. Bradley, "it's another case of wanting just that thing we don't happen to have. Having Rose you want a mistress, losing her——"

"I—what!" Harry's astonishment greeted him.

"I don't wish to be harsh."

Harry rose to him.

"Did Rose tell you this?" he asked.

"As I say, I don't wish to be harsh, Harry, my boy."

"Oh, I have no blame of her; none! She's distraught, poor girl, I know that; I wouldn't blame her, God knows. But it isn't like that, Mr. Bradley. I'm not that sort of a man, however full of fault I am. I don't love lightly; I don't think I could; it isn't in me. I fell, but Heaven knows that's a different thing. Though I say it who perhaps shouldn't, I have thought it was the very good in me that caused me to stumble. If I had been a brute I would have kept my feet."

Mr. Bradley looked more and more perplexed. His manner changed to kindliness.

"Come," said he, "tell me the story as you see it."

Harry shrank at the thought.

"No," said he, "I can't. Not to anybody; not even

to Rose. It wouldn't be decent. I'm not a professional saint, that I can afford to trapse my sins about the place. I can only say that I meant well to this girl; so far as I know myself I genuinely did. But she trapped me, and I fell once; once only, and hated myself for it. In fact, I never loved Rose as much as I did then. Nor do I blame this girl. They live pretty rotten kind of lives, those girls. Whoever blames them, I daren't. She seemed to want me, strangely enough. I suppose she won me, though I refuse to own the man she won as myself."

"You corresponded, however."

"She wrote to me, wanting to renew her conquest, I suppose." Harry spoke dejectedly, then flashed to spirit. "Mr. Bradley, if unfaithfulness means anything, this isn't it. You know that; because you think. I failed, I know; but by every axiom of morality I ought to be forgiven on remorse. And I do admit my fault; absolutely: she can't blame me as much as I do myself. Can any man do more? No, the present trouble's her pride." He faced Mr. Bradley. He struggled to express a thought that moved in him. "Do you remember how she almost refused me at first because I had to make sacrifices for her?"

"Yes."

"Well; it's the same thing now. Not that I blame her. It's not I that should blame her."

"But, Harry, you must remember there's such a thing as shattered faith."

"I know," said Harry gloomily.

"She had an extraordinary faith in you. So had I. I don't exonerate you; I don't understand you, you're so unlike myself. I can forgive you. But what am I? You're calling her to the position of wife, which is quite a different matter. You can't expect the same

standard of aloofness from her. Besides, remember! she has had a previous disappointment."

Harry winced. The words, too, awoke a curious discomfort, a dim intangible somewhat that was not to develop to maturity till a much later time.

Alice came in to lay tea, and Mr. Bradley said to her—

"Tell Rose I want her directly she comes in. And let Jim have his tea in with you."

Alice looked from one to the other with a dim sense of trouble.

Time passed, but yet no Rose appeared. Each looked at the other troublously.

"If you took my advice, Harry," said Mr. Bradley; "you would return now, and see her after a lapse of time. You must see that her mind is in a whirl of distress, and all she wants now is a chance to collect her thoughts."

"But what about myself?" exclaimed Harry. The egotism of suffering demands indulgence.

"I know."

"Besides," said Harry, fearfully and doubtfully; "she may collect her thoughts with an inimical direction, and that's what I want to forestall."

"You scarcely express much faith in her affection."

"I know it bears that interpretation. But the possibility's in the test of human nature, I think."

"Besides," said Mr. Bradley, a beam of hope shining on and from him; "there's another influence in your favour. There's a man here who has been pestering her for some time; has proposed twice in point of fact——"

"What?"

Mr. Bradley looked up amazedly at an upstanding angry Harry Denzil with accusing hand.

"Do you mean to tell me some man here has proposed marriage to her?"

"But what——?"

"Oh, this makes much plain. I was never told of this. No wonder she flew off at a tangent so quickly. Oh, Mr. Bradley, Mr. Bradley!"

"My dear boy, she hates him, abominates him!"

"Does she?"

"Well, on my honour, you young people are strange beings! First Rose, and then you, till I don't know where I am."

"But can't you see the connection?"

"No, I'm blessed if I can. Still, if it's any consolation— Well, what is it?"

A knock on the door was followed by Alice with a note. Mr. Bradley took it and read it with puckered brow and muttering lips twice and thrice over.

"All right," said he; and turning to Harry: "It's from Rose. She says she's not coming back to-night."

"What?" The interrogation was a wail of despair.

"I'm afraid I can't let you read it. I'm sorry for you, Harry; but perhaps it's wisest. She says she may see you later when she's calmer. This letter is certainly evidence of some extraordinary tempest in her mind. I never read anything like it. It makes me quite fearful for her."

"Not coming back, you say." The words were numb.

"Not to-night. She says she'll be back to-morrow, but insists that you should not be here. I'm sorry, my lad, very sorry," he went on, for Harry was chewing on his lip to restrain the tears that he deemed mocked his manhood. "As I say, perhaps it's wiser so, though of course that's smug consolation. Anyway, there it is!"

## XVII

ROSE had passed through the street in a dream after leaving Harry. She was numb. Her eyes gazed blankly ahead of her; she saw none, heeded none, cared for none. It was only when she returned back to the hotel that a tempest of passion had shattered her, relieving her withal. All life has doubtless its compensations: the very passion of primitive natures brings its relieving numbness. She grew numb with grief.

Yet her numbness melted again to fury of grief at Mr. Bradley's tender and anxious solicitation. One had alarmed him as much as the other. But her somewhat incoherent relation of events raised him to anger. Its very incoherence raised enmity in his mind; which, with his quick sympathy for the palpitating girl before him, had painted him a hooped and horned Harry indeed. He had declared his intention of promptly dealing with the miscreant who had so falsely tricked him of his faith. Even her plea could scarcely make him desist. He only forewent his decision of haling Harry forth for the rods of reproof when he saw how doubly this distressed her. Her plea for immediate flight found a ready adherent in him. She shrank from contact with reality; she fled into herself even as she had done years before: and he leapt to shield her with equal zest.

Jim's eyes had grown rounder at their flight. But he had said nothing. He found it passing difficult to discover a sequence of motive in the movements of his elders. The salient facts of his life seemed to be, that for a goodly turn of years he had been without a father, which, somehow, somewhere, seemed to make

it difficult for him to account satisfactorily for his existence in the state of affairs. He had then discovered a father, and this was the greater source of joy to him as he altogether approved of the person. But no sooner found than he had been snatched away again, and raised to the unsatisfactory glory of a myth. He had believed, had believed on authority, that this mythopœic state was about to be concluded: which was secret joy to him, for he craved actuality. He would rather stroke the hand of a real father in an arm-chair than worship a mythic father in the heavens: so mortal was he. But now, if there was any meaning to be caught from the innuendos and apocopated sentences that crossed between his red-eyed mother and his brow-ruffled grandfather, all question of father was gone, and he was back again in his fatherless state. It was perplexing; very perplexing. Perhaps one day he would understand it. But he determined now to spend all his life in search for a thoroughly satisfactory father. So he grew to obsession. Anyway, it seemed obvious that it would be extremely unwise for him to seek elucidation of his difficulties at the present juncture; and so he drew in to his own thoughts and ruminations more than ever.

Neither Rose nor Mr. Bradley, it must be confessed, paid much heed to him. Her grief overwhelmed her because it was enmeshed with all her life and scheme of being; and through her it absorbed him.

The familiarity of home had served to deaden her emotion. But it was with a shock that she had seen Harry pacing up and down outside the house. Judged by her emotions his visit was scarcely wise. Her very love for him, her very concern for him, served to raise the greater tempest in her mind. She fought against

these things as the weaknesses in her. She fled to Mr. Bradley, telling him who was without, and that she could not, dared not, see him.

Nevertheless, his very presence in the house destroyed her balance. She longed only for rest and peace of mind; artificial peace, if need be. Therefore Mr. Bradley had scarcely been closeted in with Harry when she crept out of the front door, and fled for the sea breezes.

She went down to the front. Few were abroad, for a heavy fog hung over the Channel. From out the midst of it she could hear sirens and whistles sounding, and thought of the unseen monsters that thundered through the waters from far shores, or were now venturing out having in prospect tropical heat and refulgence. It brought back to her mind her old hunger for travel. It fascinated her, and found employment for her imagination. It seemed like an inscrutable mystery being wrought before her. Out yonder there, in this chill palpable gloom, were unseen craft quivering with memory of Eastern bounty of hue; there were men who loved this very gloom with almost filial affection, like the oath of a treasured comrade. Out yonder were wrenched hearts, wounded emotions. Out yonder were mystery and fear of disaster. Each sounding siren came like an intimate voice in pain. It tranced her. As for the monster that held them in merciless grip, she could only see its foamy margins dimly, as they licked up the pebbly beach, and retreated with hiss and snarl. It loomed shadowy and monstrous, gripping its green-white figures at her. It mocked her, laughed at her, because she pitied the calling voices of pain from those it had entrapped.

She sat watching and thinking, in dreamy pain. Then she fled it because it tortured her. Why was



there no wind to buffet? She remembered Boreas was victor this day, and his breath could not reach beneath these south-western cliffs. She journeyed up to seek him. As she did so, she did not notice a burly figure that, having sighted her, had stopped, and then strode after her.

She buffeted Boreas; but found that though his breath was icy it lacked power withal. So she would need to awake adventitious combat by swift crisp walking.

Thus the figure that followed her found it not easy to overtake her. She stepped swiftly forward; he strode after her. Her pace puzzled him. Could she have sighted him? Hostility arose in him. At least he was between her and home. His eye flashed angrily. Twice had she given him contumely. But this made his action only the simpler. For, strangely! none of the so-termed gentler sex treated him with other than enmity. And therefore his attitude to them became one of professed hostility. They were not to be wooed; they were to be mastered. They were not to be sought; they were to be overborne. They might be bought. But this swiftly-speeding girl before awoke passion in him. If need be, she was to be buffeted to weakness. If placid overbearing failed, then more urgent measures were best adopted. So he sped after her.

But she knew nothing of this. Her thoughts had reverted to Harry. She wondered how his interview was proceeding. She pitied him; pitied him deeply; but could do nothing other than flee him. She heard steps behind her, but paid no heed to them. Presently a voice sounded on her ear—

"Mrs. Foggetty!"

"You!" She wheeled about as the monosyllable

fell from her lips. Her face blanched and her hands trembled as she faced him.

"You walk fast," he said.

She said nothing, but looked at him, her hands clasping and unclasping.

"Let us continue the walk," said he, pointing ahead. Still she said nothing.

He stepped forward, for her to follow him. Swiftly she turned and sped back again. He turned and made after her, muttering an imprecation. She heard him do so, and ran; but she was no match for him. She heard him running heavily after her. His blood had been whipped to anger, and he scarcely knew what he was doing. Coming abreast of her he seized her swaying wrist, and jerked her to a stop.

"Mr. Urquhart, how dare you?" she ejaculated.

"Why do you run away from me?" he said, breathing heavily.

"Because I hate you!"

"Don't I offer you everything? all that a man can?"

"I hate you, I hate you. You're objectionable to me."

"So I've heard you say before. But I assure you I intend to win in this battle. I am not the sort that am easily put off."

"Can't you leave me alone?" Appeal cried in her voice.

"What's obstructing you, and what I've got to overcome I can easily see, is a merely temporary preference for this chap—what's his name? Denzil, or something like that."

"No, no, no! I hate him, too!" She quailed at her own words.

"I beg your pardon."

"Yes, yes; I hate everybody."

"Oh, very well! If there's no preference of hatred for me then I've good reason to hope for the best."

"Please leave me!"

"Certainly not!"

She looked about her like a hunted hare. Then she fled again, he after her. This time she did not give him time to arrest her flight, but wheeled sharply on him.

"Mr. Urquhart," she gasped, "you're a perfect brute."

"Believe me, I have no wish to be," he said. "You arouse it in me. If you would only agree to my proposal you would not fail to find me most attentive. And I understand from you that there's now no fanciful objection of honour."

She hated herself for her words to this man reflecting ill on Harry.

"Can I say nothing to convince you how utterly impossible it is?" she said, moving her arms as though to throw off an impalpable weight.

"I fear, nothing!" He stepped nearer her as she spoke.

She stepped back from him, and stumbled against a stile. Heavy mists were gathering about the country, wrapping them about.

"Mr. Urquhart, I believe—I shall do something I shall be sorry for—if you don't go away." She spoke in terror of his mere physical presence.

"I want an answer, an affirmative answer, now," he said, stepping yet nearer. His voice was masterful.

Something flashed before him, and he felt a sudden sting on his cheek. She had struck him, with her clenched fist.

"You——" he exclaimed, words failing him as he surveyed this quivering pack of nerves in grey before him. She was shaking from head to foot.

"Go away, or I shall do it again," she cried, and the pain of unreason rang aloud in her voice.

"By Heaven, I won't, though!" he cried. He wrapped his arms about her, pinning her arms down, and tried to draw her face to his lips. She cried out, but he paid no heed to her. She struggled to free herself, and he struggled to retain her. At length he overpowered her and steadily drew her lips closer to his. She tried to avert her face, but he forced it opposite his again, and pressed a kiss on her lips. Again and again he kissed her.

Suddenly, with a quick motion, she freed herself. He tried to avoid her, but was not quick enough, for she rained blows upon his face.

He cried aloud with pain, and she regarded him as he spun about nursing a wounded optic. Her whole frame was shaking with the force of nervous emotion. She could scarce stand.

But this was an opportunity for escape that defied neglect. She climbed over the stile, falling prostrate in the field beyond. Raising herself, she staggered forward through the heavy wet grass, being soon lost in mist. She stumbled down a ditch, saving herself from a headlong fall by seizing some errant branches of a whitethorn hedge. Through this she found her way, and lay exhausted in a wood beyond.

There she lay and sobbed herself to quietness.

It was dark when she rose. She remembered she had left Harry at home, and feared to return. She scarcely knew how to define her thought or action now, a further coil of trouble was more than ever impossible. Thus she sat, a frail pitiful object indeed, seeking to recollect her thought. A heavy mist was darker than the darkness, and obscured all direction.

Presently the rumble of a cart passing in the gloom

gave her to know in which direction lay the road. Thither she found her way at considerable cost to orderliness of raiment.

At length she struck the bustle of habitations. It was a far-outlying suburb of Winmouth. Inspection of her purse acquainted her with the fact that she possessed sufficient money for hotel fees. Finding one, she wrote to Mr. Bradley telling him of her determination not to return that night. She wrote at length, she wrote in distress. Then she sought her bed for a night of tears.

When she returned the following morning her first outpouring to her solicitous guardian was that they must leave Winmouth there and then, with no possible delay. That something grievous had happened was too obvious, and he sought to know what it was. But he could extract nothing from her. Each soul has a barrier that forbids mention of indignities done in its sacrosanct.

He regarded her emotional chaos, and raised no difficulty. He sought to know whither she would be taken.

"London, father; London; we can be lost there."

He looked his surprise. She caught his thought.

"Yes, I know," said she, avoiding mention of Harry. "But it's a big place, and we can be lost there. I want to be lost."

## XVIII

AN ill-lit tedious train, glorying in its many stops, rejoicing to make the cold night more miserable for its human freight, bore Harry back to London. He had the carriage to himself, and lay in log-like slumber

stretched on one of its seats. There are nervous souls whom grief baulks of sleep. There are others whom grief so exhausts that sleep is no longer a tender angel but a senseless falling into a void.

London was wrapped in profound slumber when he arrived, chilled to the bone. Walking over Waterloo Bridge he apostrophized the leaden-hued, rolling Thames as a certain dark-thoughted Poet's River of Suicides. He leant over the parapet and surveyed it. It seemed he gazed down an impenetrable height at a sinuous scaly serpent below. He turned away shuddering, the vertigo of height leaving a miasma in his brain. To be rid of it, he trod swiftly forward.

Footing the Embankment he surveyed the derelicts of humanity with mingled pity and revulsion. Sodden and chilled they lay like dark blots of accusation at a luxurious city. He surveyed them, and reviled in his thought the palaces of luxury at whose feet they lay. At the roof of one of the palaces flared a lurid beacon, casting ochreous refulgence to a heavy sky. He thought to lie by them and sleep with them, but he sickened at the thought. This, thought he, is the boon of civilization: at least savagery is quit of *this!* The whole thing filled him with distaste. In a sudden pity he took out what money his pockets held, to distribute it among them. He shook one or two of the derelicts for that purpose, but could not wake them from their sodden slumbers, try as he would. He marvelled that they could even sleep: but such sleep! A raucous voice hailed him in the silence, bidding him mind what he was about, and he saw a burly constable come floating over from the City's Gardens in protection of these its cherished inhabitants. He slunk away like a criminal, the richer in coin.

The thought of Fleet Street filled him with distaste,

and therefore fascinated him. He trod his way thither, up through dark sloping alleys that boomed with printing machinery. He thought that probably some of his own work was passing through this machinery, and trod on. Fleet Street was all bustle and activity, an oasis of activity in an ocean of sleep. He gazed at the rumbling vans and knots of conversing humanity, and forgot that it was the small hours of morning.

But he did not wish activity, he wished silence, deadly isolation. And so he turned towards the Strand. Beneath a towering spire, gleaming with amber illumination of the lower lights and disappearing magnificently into night, a stall dispensed hot and watery refreshment. Mingling with the custom that surrounded it, a harlot of the people jested with him. He turned on her with a bitter comment, causing her to seek sympathy from a stoic carman. Feeling shamed at the lash he had delivered to a fellow-sufferer with him in life, he turned and apologized courteously, whereat she laughed loudly and took his arm. From the scant notice the others took of them this appeared an ordinary episode.

He trod westward. Warmed now, he lit his pipe. Passing through the odoriferous mart that bartered the produce of the earth, he surveyed awhile the horseless wagons piled to the heavens with roots and herbage, in silent and numberless array awaiting subsequent dismantling, and journeyed on westward. Threading uninterestedly through its streets weariness overcame him: the silence aided it. He could have returned to Chelsea, having still his key, but revulsion seized him at the thought. Finding out Hyde Park he surreptitiously climbed its forbidding railings, and slept on a bench beneath its mist-dripping trees.

He did not wake till dawn, and he felt chilled to the bone. He ran still farther westward to Knightsbridge, then ran sharply back again. Warmed thus, he sought out a meal, and then wandered among the people that began to gather thickly in the streets. For a time he found consolation thus among the jostling multitudes. But it palled on him. Purchasing a novel whose livid title, accompanied by a correspondingly vivid cover-illustration, tempted his weary and sated thought, he went into a hotel-lounge and read it. It sickened him, however, and leaving it he went out again to journey from tavern to tavern.

Late that night as Battersby was mulling a glass of wine, to take to his bedroom with him, he heard a ring at his flat door. Muttering execration and astonishment he opened it, and Harry lurched into his arms.

"Good God, Denzil, what the devil's the matter?" he exclaimed, seeing who it was.

"Matter? Nothing! Want to come in!" said Harry.

Battersby supported him into the room he had just quitted. He sat him on a sofa and surveyed him.

"Well, you look a pretty sight, I must say," he said. "Why, your clothes are sodden wet." He brushed the damp off his coat sleeve.

"Girl's chucked me!" Harry looked on the ground unsteadily.

This tragic note produced a tension in Battersby's mind, which he sought to relieve by a low whistle.

"Oh!" said he at length. "That's rotten, ain't it? Frightfully sorry, you know I am. And thanks for the compliment of coming round. One likes to feel one's some kind of good in this world. But that's no reason, is it, old chap, to go in for this kind of weakness?"



"'Tisn't weakness, it's strength."

"Eh?"

"So it is! You're's dull as the rest."

"Habet! I admit the charge."

"So you are! Strength's first cousin to weakness; extremes always are!"

Battersby looked on his friend, and saw a strange sight. The fumes of wine had overpowered his thought. But now that thought got to work it began to dominate and rise above the narcotic influence. Slowly it asserted its transcendence.

"If you thought a bit, you'd see that. Of course it's so. It's emotion makes the man, you must see that. Mine's so big that it makes me seem weak if I'm afraid of it. That's what it is." Harry gesticulated his point. "If I was just a damned thinking-machine I'd be less the man, and this thing wouldn't be so much to me. But it's damned thinking-machines that are weak, because they've got nothing to be strong about—not I, that have! They're nothing, I am; I'm something. By God! you see that, Battersby, don't you? You see that!"

Battersby gazed in alarm as Harry sprang up and started striding about, gesticulating and arguing his point.

"It's obvious. I'm strong; I say it who shouldn't, because I think it's true. I'm strong, and that's what makes me seem weak. Good Heavens! So plain, too! so devilish plain! I put all my whole strength to get something, to love somebody; and now that that's all gone it's turning on me and rending me. Call that weakness! It's to confuse words to think so. Good God! No, don't stop me! I'm all right, I knew very well what I'm about, although, by God, I think I'm going mad. I'm fighting against myself, and it's

fiendish. I'm fighting my own strength. I took wine to lay it under, but you've called it all up to life again. And you call it weakness! weakness! weakness!" He passed his fingers through his hair, and laughed wildly. "Weakness, forsooth!"

Battersby had tried several times to restrain his friend, but fruitlessly. He sank back in his chair helplessly. "If this isn't a brain-storm," thought he, "then I don't know what it is goes by that name. And he knew better how to treat it than I. He snowed it under with wine, and I dragged it out again. Good heavens! he'll go mad if he goes on like that!"

Quickly seizing his glass of mulled wine, he filled it up and handed it to Harry.

"Here you are, Denzil! Take this!" he said.

"Yes, yes. Give it me!" said Harry, and taking it drank it off without a stop. "You're a good chap, Battersby," he said. "I'm sorry to be all this nuisance to you. I'll go!"

"No, you don't," said Battersby, springing after him. "You just come over to your old friend the sofa."

"Old friend, yes! I was in the full hey-day of love then, wasn't I?" He permitted himself to be led submissively over.

He lay down, and as soon as he was breathing sufficiently heavily, Battersby brought some rugs and covered him over; then went softly out of the room, muttering as he went, "Rum thing, human nature!"

Thrice that night Battersby came down to see how Harry fared. Each time he was muttering in his sleep, but it was obvious he was indeed asleep. In fact, so profound was Harry's slumber that it delayed Battersby's breakfast to the point of discomfort. He had finally to wake him.

Harry was no sooner awake than he was in full

memory of all that had happened, declaring his intention to be gone.

"Not a bit of it!" said Battersby. "You've just jolly well got to earn your night's lodging by helping me with my proofs all day. And as I don't intend to let an unclean wretch like you mess about with my work, you'd better bathe and shave."

"Battersby!" said Harry, with more emotion than he cared to show, "you're among the angels."

Later Battersby sought to discover what the seat of the trouble was, but he could learn nothing from Harry more than that his betrothed had rejected him, and that he assumed whatever blame and fault there was. He did not permit Harry to leave him till he was setting out for the office.

Reaching home, Harry surveyed his room, bitterly recalling the scene of a few days previous. He noticed with a start that his ring still lay where Rose had placed it. He took it and put it in his cash-box methodically. Then he removed all the photographs of Rose, including those in which he figured with her, grimly, well-nigh sneeringly.

Having set his room in order he attacked his letters. He noticed one from Gwendoline, and picked it up first. He was about to hurl it away, but desisted; reading it instead. His heart beat quickly as his eye caught sight of Rose's handwriting inside. Turning eagerly to Gwen's letter, he read—

"MY DEAR HAL,

"I got this letter from your 'young lady.' I didn't think you were the sort to have given me away like this. I'm disappointed. But men are all the same. I wish you joy of your future. Judging by her letter you've dropped on hot stuff.

"I wrote you some days ago to tell you that my boy wants me to go to Paris with him, and to ask you if you would like me to stay. I would have stayed for you. But not having any reply (and after this letter!) I've decided to go. I go next Sunday. If you like you can come and say good-bye.

"Your pal that was,

"GWEN.

"P. S.—You're not a bad boy, Hal, but you need to pull your socks up."

Harry turned to Rose's letter, and as he read it, it half moved him to anger, half touched him to tears. It surged with bitter hatred of Gwen, and was evidently written on the very night of their separation. A man he, he could not comprehend the mood that could display itself in such bitter reviling. It made him shamefast to read it. But the wail that sounded in his ears from the reading of it gave him to know how much his loss was to Rose, and how absolutely her faith had been shattered. He could not understand her rejection of him in the face of it. And yet he understood it sufficiently well to accept it. Reading it again it moved him to tears.

As he was reading it the maid came in to know if he wished a fire. Yes, he did. So she laid and lit it. Sitting by its crackling forks of flame he lit his pipe and sought to think out what his future now meant to him.

It faced him blankly with nothing to tempt or beckon him. With a cry of pain he arose. Tearing up the review he had been half through, he re-wrote it—this time couched in a bitter strain.

BOOK IV

CONCLUSIONS



## I

HIGH noon and high summer demand, for fit appreciation, a lithe swinging hammock beneath a mottled orchard shade. Those who are wise and fortunate rejoice in it; those who are wise and unfortunate futilely crave it; those who are fortunate yet foolish neglect it. Were it laid down for a sociological axiom that at such a time such a pleasure was the inalienable right of mankind, the immediate political effect might be dire, but the subsequent effect on the temper of mankind could not but be healthy and desirable. An incidental effect would be to weed the wise from the foolish.

As it chanced, the wise and the foolish were inextricably mixed in a certain street in the west of London on such a day. Summer had gone by in pomp of beauty, but was still present in pomp of power. Its flowery garlands were withering from fragrance, its feathered chorals had thinned from the full-voiced choir to a slender and weary note here and there. But yonder sun that rose to its southern zenith had lost nothing of its power: had gained, rather. It poured down its molten fury on suffering humanity. Pale faces in the crowd expressed unutterable weariness at the intolerable state of affairs. Not all the faces were weary, however.

The curious festival known to its initiates as the Summer Sales had arrived. Worshippers from far and near had arrived, their faces expressing varying degrees of fervour and zealotry. They might have

been termed the Foolish for having eschewed the charms of the hammock and mottled shade aforesaid, save that it is an acknowledged fact that religious festivals are only things of derision to the uninitiated. So might a raw Caucasian have ejected a derisive tongue at Eleusis. Demeter, however, would have found contentment more than enough in the rapt joy to be seen on the faces of the devotees. Similarly the western shrines of London wanted not mockers. But what cared the great god Bargain as he scanned the myriad upturned beautiful faces held fast with one ecstatic expression! What mattered the black-coated Caucasians yonder, in whose variously hirsute faces alarm mingled with scorn, with now and then benevolent tolerance! His devotees were smooth and beautiful, and they at least knew the great mysteries that were forward. To them he was willing to unfold his beauty; the price whereof the black-coated strangers yonder had to pay in penalty for their scorn.

Therefore the dogmas already laid down with regard to fashion and folly have to be qualified. A greater than dogmas had come to suspend their logical insistence, even as a mystic is above all reason.

Among the strangers who passed through the worshippers with amused tolerance was Harry Denzil. He had an appointment not far from here, and to fill up his hollow of time he had turned aside his highway to mingle in this festival. A fanatical ejaculation of awe would now turn his head in one direction; a group of figures bent nearly prostrate with reverence would now turn his attention in another direction. But his body floated through the gay waters with easy unperturbed motion.

The waters were gay indeed. The great god Bargain had laid it down as an indispensable adjunct for



his devotees that they should array themselves in his own gorgeous vesture. The hues of the chameleon were here, and more besides. Dire would have been the fate attending that frail lizard had he in a moment of foolish ambition attempted some of the variegated hues here displayed. It was a festive scene, as befitted a festive occasion. The very shrines themselves were decked with the glory of the rainbow. For the less versed in the rites, gay directions were displayed beside the necessary objects of worship.

The worshippers were in high ecstasy, forgetful of all else. So none of them heeded Harry as he moved fearlessly among them. He found their throngs sociable and companionable. He had come to love such indiscriminate company, shunning the more regular avenues of companionship, and therefore, while not attempting to understand matters beyond his comprehension, he rejoiced in this large aggregate companion he had found, who paid no heed to him. The waters lapped about him in soft ablution of his loneliness.

Moreover, he even took interest in their proceedings, seeking to discover the strange occasion of their ecstasy. A crowd of some ten or twelve, he noticed, bowed all of them in reverent posture before some or other saintly relic that they obscured from his notice. Moving over, he stood beside them. Presently, when their prayers were finished, and they had moved away, he won first rank and stood before the object of their worship. In a plain lacquer reliquary he saw a coil of what, to his unsophisticated and cooler brain, seemed somewhat crude lace. Some of its strands had been drawn out and twisted about the lid of the reliquary for better display. His mouth twitched as he watched, and a smile flickered over his lips. A close observer,

though there were none there, might have called his smile a sad one. Patiently he sought to discover the sacredness of this relic.

As he did so a laugh struck on his ear. It conveyed nothing to him, but the voice in reply blanched his cheek. It seemed to come not so much from without as from his own brain. Without knowing it he turned sharply about, to see Rose passing before him. She was in conversation with a companion.

It seemed as though all power of motion had faded from his limbs. A sudden coldness seized him. Mists grew before his eyes, and to save himself from falling he put out his hand and seized something that was soft in his grip. An exclamation of protest brought him to himself.

"I beg your pardon," said he absently to a little old gentleman that stood opposite him with meek aspect and angry eyes.

"And so I think you should," replied that gentleman with asperity, moving off among the people with a suspicious glance, and the muttered exclamation, "Most extraordinary proceeding!" as he smoothed out the ruffled lapel of his coat.

Harry gave him but a glance and turned to see Rose melting through the crowd. She looked strangely beautiful in white summer attire, like a vision over a troubled dream. The thought came to him to speed swiftly after her. But her friend by her side shone forbiddingly. In his present sudden weakness it would have been no easy task to have spoken to her in this crowd, that he knew dimly of, though he saw it not. But before this other girl! Should he? Could he?

Moreover, he seemed strangely incapable of motion. An icy hand crushed his brain. His hands clasped and unclasped. As they did so another hand

was thrust into one of his: small, slight; and timidly looking down he saw Jim before him. The lad's eyes were fixed in wide commiseration on him.

"Mother's there," said he.

"So I see, Jim," he answered somewhat bitterly.

"Aren't you going to her?" said Jim slowly.

The thought came swiftly on him to snatch the lad up and take him to his mother, finding excuse thus for conversation. But a strange afterthought held him. He almost smiled.

"I think perhaps I'd better not," he said.

"Don't you want to speak to her, fa—a—?"

Harry heard him struggle with the word "father," and was stirred to his depths.

"I do very much, Jim."

"She often cries for you."

Harry's thought quailed at the picture. Inexpressible pity seized him.

"Does she?"

"Yes, I think so."

Harry's thought grew to a sudden resolve.

"Very well, Jim, you shall take me to see her. But come now! let's go and have some lunch together."

Rose had vanished through the crowd, and he feared to pursue her now.

## II

MOODY and almost listless progress had marked Harry during the interim of time that had borne him to so strange a meeting with Rose. An unbroken and almost overwhelming spiritual hunger had possessed him for weeks continuously prior to this scene; and it

was born of a distaste of life that had its roots in bitter experience.

Within a fortnight of his first visit to Winmouth he had journeyed thither again—to greet an empty house, that hung abroad an invitation to prospective denizens. It seemed incredible; his brain defied the message of its outposts, but could not maintain its disbelief before so patent and irrefutable a piece of evidence. That night he had stayed in Winmouth. Nothing would tempt the new address from the Post Office officials; but his evident desire and his extraordinary opportunity won from them the frail piece of information that it was to the Metropolis Mr. Bradley had wished his letters redirected. This given, the fear of having given so much had come over them, and he could not even get any further reply from them on the subject. The following day had seen him borne dejectedly back, in a melancholy that had subdued his previous intense thought to torpor.

A tear-driven letter had brought him two replies. One from Rose had spoken of her wounded faith. It scourged him with a spiritual flail as he had read it. She did not say much in it, but he could perceive that she had bled in the construction of it. He said to the memory that he waved before his eyes of her that he could not understand her; but in his own thought he knew well that he could. Her quiet insistence conveyed conviction. She wished, if she could, to forget him. In a delicately veiled reference to her previous experience she said that perhaps it was better for her not to think of lovers and wedlock; that she was too sensitive, it may be. She praised him, she extolled his gifts, she expressed no doubt of his career. But it was better, she thought, to endure this pain now than court a fury of pain in later years when there

could be no unbinding of the fatal bond between them. She said she grieved to pain him, for she knew it pained him deeply; she could only plead that it was no less a pain for herself. If it was she who cut the bond, she bled not less than he. But in the light of the past she could not think without deadly fear of any legal bond between them.

Harry had cried to have her opposite him, for he knew that he could then have convinced her, personally. He had written seeking at least an interview, writing by way of Winmouth, for she had given no address. Her reply had firmly, yet with obvious effort at tenderness, refused this. She feared such an interview for she feared his bodily presence. She knew he would be able to overwhelm her and force her against her conviction. He would probably enlist her own self against her conviction, and she would not, dared not, court it. Mr. Bradley's letter had been quiet and searching. It commended patience, and expressed a wish to learn if Harry changed his address. It flashed a little hope, despite its application of steel; whereas her letter plunged him into despair. Again, a month thereafter, he had written her, but had received no reply.

His mind refused to entertain a life in which she did not figure. Therefore he had sought to escape the terrible mental torture of wresting his conceptions to a prospect they refused; he had sought to do so in divers ways.

Gwendoline Farrer dwelt in Paris. At least, so far as he knew, she did so, for his mind turned from her with something almost of personal revulsion. Even had she been near, she was too nearly tied with something much like affection for her to have afforded him the abandon of forgetfulness. Wine was a narcotic

only for fierce and furious strain, not for the intolerable lethargy of despair. His delicacy of thought turned with loathing from a steady and remorseless imbibing, if not induced to it by the convivialities of meet company. And company filled him with horror: even the mere thought of it.

He had won his narcotic when he wanted it. But brain-storms are not induced by such unutterable lethargies of despair as had seized him. Now and then he would bring forth her ring, or produce her portrait, in a desire for self-torment; and then they would seize him, taking him nigh to madness on a river of tears. At such times his red narcotic would foam to his lips, never mastering his manhood; mastering rather his too urgent blood, for he was stout of brain.

Stranger sirens won him. In their laps he had found abandon; on their lips he had purchased revelry. But he had grown to dread their felicities; for a grey morn had always brought a thrice-beautiful Rose to his waking memory, and he had looked with something perilously like venom of hatred on the face pillowed beside his. For days, sometimes weeks, thereafter, satiety and self-despite would hold him remorselessly, vitiating all his outlook. By it, also, there was awakened a desire for Rose that irked his very manhood.

Rhythms of fury came on him. At such times he would forget all earlier revulsions and attempt to disprove past experiences—unless it so happened, as it often did, that the tempting siren's mercenary zeal drove him headlong in flight.

Thus satiety seized him, and a great void that he yearned to fill. It even sapped the strength from his work, though it was only when he plunged into this that he achieved forgetfulness. Battersby had at one

time suggested a return home, but the astonished eyes and the great scoff that had greeted this proposal had soon disillusioned that worthy friend as to whether Harry entertained any regrets at having left there. Having failed, however, to achieve Harry a resting-place in this way, Battersby made another attempt by insisting on his joining him at his flat, asking his collaboration in a lengthy critique he projected on a foreign dramatist. He had scarcely expected such fury of labour. For Harry had pushed it to an astonishingly rapid conclusion; and had vanished again.

It was Mr. Richard Webber-Colquhoun who had brought the chiefest respite to Harry. Barras he saw little of, but Webber-Colquhoun he met continually. He had dined several times at his flat, having, on one occasion, met there a beautiful but masterful young lady that Webber-Colquhoun had introduced as his "friend" carelessly enough, minding little, as it was obvious the lady minded little, if Harry went on to deduce a yet more intimate relation. Moreover, they had met elsewhere also. It was easy for Harry to see that Webber-Colquhoun liked him, and that he was a little puzzled at his own preference. This was the more interesting to Harry as it had been somewhat the same with himself. He liked the man, if only for his melancholy uninterestedness in life: but there was, moreover, something he had lately thought or heard, or both, about this man that puzzled him each time they met. When Webber-Colquhoun was gone the thought was gone; when Webber-Colquhoun was present the demands of conversation irritated him because they forbade him pursuing this thing to its finish, this will-o'-the-wisp to its fenny lair.

Further, there were the shares. It amazed Harry at first to note Webber-Colquhoun's accurate prog-

noses with regard to these. Once only had he been wrong, and then he had seemed extraordinarily vexed: but with Barras, not with the caprice of market vagaries. Several times had Harry's shares changed hands. Once Webber-Colquhoun had advised him to sell, and to send him word when the transaction was complete. He had done so; when, strangely enough! an extraordinary declension had set in. Then, after a while, there had come a line from Webber-Colquhoun bidding him buy. He had done so; and his holding had promptly proceeded very nearly to double its value. He had questioned his adviser with regard to the strangeness of this; and had learnt in reply that Barras might have his faults, but he was certainly a "perfect genius." He had had his attention drawn to certain columns in weekly papers that discussed finance subjects. In these he saw innocent, innocuous letters of inquiry which seemed to amuse Webber-Colquhoun vastly. Harry noticed that the editor's replies to those inquiries seemed in most cases to bear out in a marked manner the suggestions. In some cases, they contradicted them in the most emphatic manner; and Harry noticed that it was these latter that seemed to amuse Webber-Colquhoun most. He read one over, and referred to Barras as a "damn' sly dog." Other things he told Harry, too, that gave Harry to know that he was but one of some thirty or forty others who were all acting always in concert with regard to buying and selling, and that Barras was Intelligence-in-Chief to all these. This had perplexed and distressed Harry considerably.

Nor had his distress been relieved when a line came from Webber-Colquhoun bidding him sell, and advising him under no circumstances to touch them again. He had recommended another company's shares; but



Harry, having sold, had kept the money apart, determining not to touch it awhile, *not*, at least, till his doubts had been set at rest. This desired quiescence of a supersensitive conscience had not been aided by the fact that since his sale a renewed active declension of the market had come about in those shares.

This adventitious excitement had proceeded with the unrest of his own deep soul; yet it had tended to allay it somewhat, being in truth a counter-irritant. But as the Spring had come and gone, his craving for Rose had become intense beyond all power to bear it. It had made him leave his work often, to pace his room to and fro crying aloud for her in a wail of hopelessness.

Summer had intensified his passion. The voice of sirens won him no longer; he stood above them; they spelt disillusionment for him, and thereby had intensified the aching void his emotions gnawed at. He avoided the river fearfully. Once it had tempted him down to one of its deserted quays. Its darkness had made him shudder. A voice had hailed him, and he had fled it, to fear it in his thought and avoid it in his ways.

He knew not how this grief would end. It was too steadfastly poignant to continue. It harried him by night as by day. Perhaps it was thus, by the very self-evasion of hope, that the conviction had grown on him that he would see Rose soon—somewhere, somehow. He had grown to scanning the faces of people in the highways, causing considerable discomfort thereby. But no Rose had he seen. Nevertheless the conviction had grown in him and had buoyed him.

The previous morning he had seen in his paper a notification of the liquidation of the Candida Oil Development Company, and he had written forthwith to

Webber-Colquhoun asking to meet him to-day, intending fierce discussion and uncomfortable questioning.

### III

JIM held a tight grasp of Harry's hand as they turned down a street whose slight length was well matched by its vaporous name.

"I may call you father, mayn't I?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said Harry, startled to hear the familiar subject.

"I mean, you are my father, aren't you?"

"Of course!"

There was something unsatisfactory about this last reply that caused Jim to look up. He ceased his questions.

"Well, where are you living now, laddie?" Harry took up the part of interlocutor, attempting to assume naturalness of manner.

Jim's eyes opened with wide wonder. This seemed to make the whole situation complex.

"Streatham," he said.

This man that seemed not altogether so certain as he might have been with regard to his parental position, looked on him with a ray of delight as he said this. The fact pleased him; also puzzled him, striking a strange sense of bad ethic somewhere.

"Do you remember the address?"

"No, I don't, father."

Disappointment loomed down on him from above and awoke his sensitive sympathy.

"But I could find it from the station," he continued, and was glad to note sunshine sweep the physiognomical clouds away.

They had turned into the street where an ancient dandocracy purchased its neckwear; and entered a resplendent dining resort. At the appointed table Harry saw Webber-Colquhoun, who, when he caught sight of Harry, raised his brows in surprise to see him accompanied thus. A quick pang shot through Harry as he made his way thither. All the discomfort he had experienced during these past months rose to new power. It was now like a thundercloud which awes and perplexes the imagination, and from out the midst of which quivering lightnings flash in half-illumination of an unknown object. Webber-Colquhoun's face, indeed, seemed familiar now in a new sense.

"Who's your charge?" the question hailed him as an obsequious waiter produced a chair for the "charge."

Harry avoided the question, saying—

"You're early, aren't you? Or is it I who am late?"

"A little of each, I think. I waited lunch for you. Is the youngster going to fire through the courses?"

"What do you say, Jim?" Harry asked, putting his arm over Jim's shoulder and looking down at him. Jim's face, too, seemed now strangely familiar! Was his brain acting normally? What was this extraordinary prestidigitation of unrealities? What this vague sense of the vast and intangible? Had his sudden joy overwhelmed temporarily his sense of accustomed facts?

"What, father?" The question was put in obvious elucidation of his query. Webber-Colquhoun started up in obvious amazement at the epithet.

Harry started out of a dream of thought, bringing his vague unrest with him, to answer him.

"What would you like for lunch? Anything in particular, or a little of all sorts?"

"What are you going to have, father?"

The epithet now confused Harry.

"A little of all sorts, I think," he said, with a marked desire not to look over at Webber-Colquhoun.

"Then I will."

"Two, *table d'hôte!*" said Harry. He knew Webber-Colquhoun was regarding him, and was not surprised when the question greeted him.

"*In loco parentis?*"

"Yes, for the day." Harry looked at Webber-Colquhoun as he spoke, and the riddle seemed somehow clearer.

"Youth takes uncommon zest in the epithet for a rare occurrence anyhow."

Harry flushed, and looked suspiciously at the speaker.

"Further, it's a prospective honour for me," he said. "My *fiancée's* son, in other words," he added defiantly.

A sudden and alert Jim looked for a moment out of Webber-Colquhoun's face, startling Harry. A vast sense of horror struck on him.

"I didn't think you were that sort. I suppose I ought to congratulate you, if I didn't happen to think married life was extinction. May I inquire the happy lady's name?"

"Miss—eh—Mackenzie," said Harry hastily. He knew Jim was wondering at him.

"Oh!" said Webber-Colquhoun with his eyes on Jim. He plucked an olive with too obvious courtesy.

Harry blushed scarlet at his blunder.

"She holds the same opinion as I do, contending that a widow should revert to her maiden name so as

not to burden a defunct husband's family with a relationship that no longer interests them," he said, with the dark consciousness that his excuse smacked too much of a ready coinage.

"Oh!" said the other, placing a bared olive-stone at the side of his plate. He waited till the mellow waves of the monosyllable had faded from the air, and then added, "Country's beginning to get a bit overdone now. Have you been for a holiday yet?"

"No. You're just back, aren't you?"

"Yes. Do you propose going down?"

"I may. Looking overdone, you say?"

"Frightfully. You should go. A man wants the country at least once a year."

"I'm not so sure he doesn't want it always. You've got property in Suffolk, haven't you?" Harry ventured this. He did not know; but it followed up his thoughts.

"Yes. You must come down some day."

"Are you near anywhere in particular?"

"Quite close to Ipstowe, as a point of fact."

Harry looked down at Jim, and then darkly at Webber-Colquhoun. His thoughts were fierce and bitter. He let the other's next question go by unanswered, knowing that he repeated it and awaited a reply.

A long period of silence succeeded to this. Each of the trio went forward with his meal, each thinking his own thoughts, each unhappy in the thinking of them. Every now and then Jim stole a glance at Harry. So also did Webber-Colquhoun, varying it with puzzled looks at Jim. It seemed to him that the boy seemed equally puzzled at him; certainly he awoke a strain of emotion that, being uncomfortable, he ruthlessly put from him.

"I understand you wished to speak to me about something particular, Denzil," he said at length.

"Yes," said Harry. "I noticed yesterday that the Candida was being wound up."

"Yes," said Webber-Colquhoun, and laughed a little awkwardly.

"What was the matter with it?"

"Experts a bit mistaken in their calculation."

"What are the assets?"

"Oh, machinery, the grant of land, etc. I don't fancy they're much anyhow," he added with an excess of frankness.

"How do you come off in this?" asked Harry with hard suspicion.

"I? Good God! I cleared out at top, same as you did, Denzil."

Harry disregarded the blow, and continued—

"But was there any oil there?"

"I understand there was a little—dispersed through the soil, and not worth working. But what's this interrogatory about, Denzil? What are you driving at?"

"Any awkward questions asked yet?" continued Harry, paying no heed to this outburst.

"Good Heavens, no! The men in the City are too good sportsmen for that kind of thing. They take their losses with their gains."

"I suppose one's as likely to be a swindle as the other."

Webber-Colquhoun flushed angrily.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"I'm thinking of the poor devils outside the City, who, I suppose, usually come in at the end and pay the piper."

Webber-Colquhoun lost his temper.

"Damn it, Denzil!" he said; "if you want to play the Puritan let me tell you that I think you're a very poor person to do it, seeing you cleared a fair sweep yourself, and that without any risk whatsoever."

The blow struck home. Harry rose.

"I helped it, too, didn't I?" he said.

"Gad, so you did!"

"I'll talk further about this with you, I think," said Harry.

"I'm in all days up to eleven," said the other frigidly.

"Two on one bill," said Harry to the waiter that bustled to learn what had interrupted the repast.

"I'm paying for this," called Webber-Colquhoun in expostulation.

"Thanks, I wish no favours from a vampire, directly I know him. Besides, when I come to see you I fancy I'll have another subject to talk to you about. Good-day!"

Webber-Colquhoun looked after the retreating Harry. He, too, felt no further desire to continue temporizing with viands, blaming the over-sultry room for his nausea. He swept a clear space before him. "I thought he'd turn at the end," he said to himself; "he is just that sort. And, mind you, I don't like it myself; I must admit that. Still, others do it. I'll go down and see Barras."

Harry led Jim through the parks, and thus on to Chelsea. He wished to cool his brain from its confusion.

"Who is that man?" Jim had asked him regarding Webber-Colquhoun, and a sudden nausea made it difficult for him to reply.

"A man I'm sorry I ever met," he said at last.

"Was that why you were so angry with him?"

"Yes."

"I'm so sorry, father," had come the soft reply, in accompaniment of which an affectionate hand crept into Harry's.

Once back again at Chelsea the disparate fragments of perplexity seem to fall more into an orderly scheme. With a steady indolence he produced the large portrait of Rose that he kept hidden in a ready drawer, and displayed it on his table. However subtly he sought to do so, he was nevertheless not quick enough for Jim.

"Mother's got one like that of you," said he.

Harry knew that well, for were the two not gift-fellows? But in what regard did she hold it? His blood had fluttered through his veins with swifter motion at the innocent remark, and as he put his question it gave a tremulous wave to his voice.

"Oh! Where does she keep it?"

"In a drawer like you do yours. But she takes it out to look at it sometimes. She doesn't like me to talk about you."

Harry was silent. He turned his face away from the boy. Jim, however, had risen to unusual heights of loquacity, and ventured information on a variety of themes well-pleasing to his companion. At length he said, as with the air of one making a discovery of peculiar zest and relish—

"Won't mother be surprised to find me gone like this?"

Harry turned about amazedly. For the first time the thought of Rose's distress struck him. It brought large pity to his mind. Yet surely it was well he had done this: if only for subsequent felicity! Nevertheless, it would cause him to be called upon to make explanation of his abduction of her boy. He began to



fear the picture this raised. He could only avoid blame, winning his way to the thanks that would extend the sprig of olive to him if all else failed, by assuming the position of Jim's discoverer, which would need sinking mention of his sight of her pale-vestured glory over his gloom of thought. Yet, whatever else was doubtful, it was certain that he must speed to Streatham with his prize as soon as possible.

Thus the torrid August day was fading to a close when Harry arrived with his charge at Streatham station. The sky was cloudless, and a solar luminary, that increased in girth the lower he sank to eclipse, threw its parting rays into a blue-opal dome of clear sky. The horizon around and about was dusky, not with cloud, but with vaporous exhalation. A quiet coolness was beginning to creep into the air, and perspiring mortality was airing itself. As he looked up the High Street it seemed like a floating river of shimmering whiteness, in which wavelets of pale colour sparkled. Mortality in soberer and less wise raiment emerged behind him from the station, flushed of cheek, and evidently irked as to temper. He gave over leadership now to his young charge.

He was led through a maze of streets with unerring direction, being finally brought before a picturesque unit of a vast villadom. A fear such as he had never known entered him as he was led up to the door to beat on it his signal of attention. He feared to see Alice, and was relieved to note a younger servitor in her place, who greeted their arrival with a round exclamation.

He heard her announce their arrival with eager excitement, as he stood in the darkened hall, having fast hold of Jim's hand.

"There's a gentleman come with Master Jim."

"Oh!" cried a voice within that thrilled him; and a flutter of skirts brought Rose into the hall.

She did not heed him as he stood with the light behind him. She sprang to her child.

"Oh, Jim!" she cried in a relief of joy, catching him to her lips and arresting his greeting.

Harry's heart beat wildly as he surveyed her. He uttered the one word—

"Rose!"

She dropped her child and gazed at him.

He spoke her name again.

"Harry! Oh, Harry!" Her breast breathed in great gasps. She put out her hands for support.

He did not move to her. He felt he dared not.

"Oh, why did you come?" she said.

"I brought Jim."

The shock of pain and growth was on her, and he waited for it to pass awhile.

"Why did you come?" she said again.

"I came for you, Rose, I can't do without you, even though I might wish to, which I don't." He, too, could scarcely think clearly, and spoke stumblingly: "Rose, don't you want me, too?"

Sobs quivered and shuddered in her. He took her unresistingly into his arms to soothe her. She, he felt, was not able yet to bear affection, so he gave only comfort, restraining all warmth of caress.

"Oh, Harry," she murmured, extricating herself.

He let her free. He would not resist her.

"Come in here, and let's talk," he said, and guided her into a room that was strange to him.

Jim watched them with mute interest; and when the door closed behind them he went upstairs with streaming eyes.

## IV

THEIR departure from Winmouth had been accelerated by the fact that nothing would tempt Rose from the house while there. Mr. Bradley had made no further inquiries as to the reason of her manifest distress, but this repugnance to sallying out was a clue that gave him to know something not far from the truth. In pity for her he moved forthwith.

He had endeavoured to extract confidence from her with regard to Harry, but here, too, failure greeted him. He saw that she was attempting, at whatever cost might be, to break all memory of the past. It brought pain, and she feared it. So he had not urged her, thinking to let Time bring its own healing. He hoped the health it would bring would not be that of forgetfulness, but knew not how to avoid such a result.

Yet in seeing this he saw but a half-truth. Strange as it may seem to the little versed in human intricacies, far from forgetting Harry she had been nursing the tenderest memory of him. He of the flesh and blood, he of the headlong failure, was banished from her thought. But she had clung to the Harry that had shone with such true refulgence in the wonder of loving imagination. It was this Harry that the paste-board likenesses, that she nursed in a treasured drawer, connoted. It was this Harry that had given her the brooch she wore so faithfully and so continuously; not the structure of nerves and muscle that lived in far Chelsea. She wished she had kept the ring of warm rubies: the cleavage would have been sharper, and thus the memory would have been

sweeter. It was a soilure to her ideal to think that its fleshy counterpart owned this link between them.

She had, at first, sought his contributions to an ephemeral literature. But these had contained strains of bitterness, almost of cynicism, that her ideal never would have pursued. So she ceased this journalistic zeal, since it was only contributory to mental, to say nothing of emotional, confusion.

After a short unhappy experience as nomads they had sought refuge at Streatham. Since the years were now heavy with Alice, they had been constrained to procure her a younger auxiliary, and this had had its corresponding effect on their prestige in the neighbourhood. They were ranked among the bi-domestics, and were esteemed accordingly. Alice and her auxiliary had actually been seen on the front steps together one day, and the result had been a prompt influx of visitors. These had evidently been the bolder-hearted, the pioneers who snapped adventurous fingers at convention. These sturdy souls had borne the tidings to the more timorous that whoever Mr. Bradley was, or whencesoever he came, he certainly had "means": conjugated in the comparative as comfortable means, and in the superlative as private means. The simple positive relieved him of any doubt of criminality or moral undesirability; the comparative made him estimable as a social acquisition; the superlative put him among the gentry, and made him even a mark for ambition to strive after.

Visitors accordingly began to call on them. They were acknowledged as worthy. Moreover, as the spring came on, Mr. Bradley, in his advancing years, was stricken with the prevailing scourge of gardening. This brought more visitors, and Rose was thus caught up in a vortex of friends, some of whom she despised,

but some whom she esteemed. Most of them, it must be confessed, returned her dislike with dislike, finding her emphasis of thought and impatience of mood, to say nothing oftentimes of her brooding melancholy, distasteful and disquieting. They showed this not in manner but in matter. They smiled, or bowed, as graciously as aforetime; but when she was gone their tongues made exquisite sword-play with her fame.

But that she should have sifted a few among them to exchange a more equal regard with, had been a gain. She had thrown herself with more zest into such friendships owing to the very tenderness of her inward wound. At worst they were a counter-irritant; at best an emollient.

Moreover, they lubricated the passing of the days, and thus helped her further towards that time when the intangible would be a reality indeed, and the Harry of flesh and blood a myth of the past.

It was in such a mood she had been drawn to the great feminine festival. Mr. Bradley, with a sympathy rare with the unintelligent male, had furnished her with the wherewithal to engage in a goodly number of rites. Jim had clung to her in the throng, mystified and perplexed at the extraordinary multitudes. Now and then a stray anxiety concerning him had distracted her from the festival; but finding that he clung closely to her, this anxiety faded with the passing of time. She leant on his obvious recognition as to where his safety lay in the throng of worshippers.

In truth, it was not until she had arrived beneath the nimble archer that wings his shafts aloft London's most decorative Circus that she became aware of her loss.

"I thought he was keeping to us so well," she made

her tearful protest, defending herself thus, too, from neglect.

"So he was, all the time," responded her comrade.

An appeal to the constabulary evoked the sympathy of notebooks and interrogatories. She endeavoured to sweep such functionary zeal aside so as to procure a readier assistance. But officialdom knew but one dehumanized way to go, and, though it reduced her to a torrent of tears, yet she had to tread that way with it. By the time the interrogatory was complete, and the notebook was put away, Harry and his charge had already sighted Webber-Colquhoun. Then the blue-coated limb of the law had suggested a perambulation back along the way they had come, lest the truant be found in tears awaiting his guardians. This failed of discovery; and the only thing officialdom could suggest was a return home, and patience.

"Of course," he added reassuringly, "if there's been an accident we should hear at once."

It must be set as an everlasting testimony to feminine obtuseness that this raised an agony of apprehension in Rose's mind.

However much wisdom recommended a return home for a display of exemplary patience, it was scarcely to be imagined that maternal anxiety could fall readily in with so trite a suggestion. Nevertheless, it had finally to be adopted for very weariness.

Mr. Bradley had sought to comfort Rose, being tempted only to one delicate censure of feminine excitement. Indeed, he had been actually suggesting innumerable methods by which Jim could have achieved safety, when his arrival had been announced. He was about to follow Rose out into the hall, when a strangely familiar voice struck on his ear. Hearing it, he had stopped. Then he had gone out by the open

French window to the scent of jasmine and the dusky advent of twilight. In his face was the light of gladness, for to him, too, the months had brought wisdom.

## V

"AREN'T you glad I have come?"

"I am, and I'm not."

Harry sat opposite Rose as he asked his question, and he made no attempt to touch her. He wisely let his presence work its own effect.

"Rose, I have come as a supplicatory: don't—for the sake of your sex, if not for mine—don't be hard, don't be merciless, though, dear, I think your sex is naturally harder than ours."

"I don't want to be hard, Harry; but you don't know how I have suffered."

"You know how I regret that." He, too, had suffered; yet he let it pass, for the obvious retort was that he was responsible for that.

They spoke little, and their speech was tense and tragic. He had his eyes fixed on her face, but her eyes looked away across the room. He evidently was struggling with her; she was struggling with the tenderer self that had sprung up pleading in her. Its coming meant the coming of pain, and she shrank from it.

"Rose," he said, "why do you look like that?"

"I don't know. I don't know what to think."

He gazed earnestly, anxiously, on her. What strange combat was going on behind those far-fixed eyes he could but dimly realize. He saw their lids flutter and their lashes moisten. When he saw that, great hope and great pity stirred in him.

"Rose!" he said.

Slowly the raindrops of her mind fell on her cheeks. Her resistance grew weaker and her tenderer self had awakened. Her face bowed on her arms and her tears flowed freely. Instantly he was by her side.

"Dear, you have shown me what I wanted to know," said he presently, and there was, perhaps, more than a little of the victor's triumph in his voice. "We must never be separated again after this."

She suffered him to take her in his arms now, and to caress her. He soothed her as he might a child, and she felt victory sweeping over her soul. She quenched her tears, and freed herself from him. There was hardness in her voice as she said—

"What have you done about that woman?"

The question struck him as with a corporeal blow. The lyric of anguish rang in his voice as he replied: "I've never seen her since that—that night."

Obvious incredulity greeted this reply. The soft modelling of her chin grew hard and strained.

"I could forgive it if I knew all—all. It's just this terrible uncertainty I can't bear." Her manner was almost fierce.

"My dear, you do. Don't let your imagination torture you with fanciful evils."

Her manner expressed convinced doubt. It raised a tempest in his thought to find his plain speech discredited. He flew to emphasis.

"Don't you believe me? I neither know where she is, nor anything about her. What I know, you know; and I protest my main interest, apart from my stumble, sprang from all that was best in me. I believe she knew it, and played on it; but there it is! The man that went through that is the better man now;



and you ask the younger and worse because more immature man! I can't understand you, dear."

"You were my ideal of all that was best and purest."

He stumbled on the irrefragable rock between them.

"Isn't there a value for the wisdom of growth and experience?" he asked.

"Not for me!" she said. Feeling a sense of truth in what he said, however alien to her, she went on to add, "I loved you, I think, because I trusted and admired you; I looked up to you."

"Are we all to stand still at puberty, then?" He whelmed her with his force and passion of speech. "What's the meaning of life, Rose, if a man is not to enrich himself by experience? I didn't seek it, God knows; I tried to flee it. It found me out, though, and I protest I wouldn't have it otherwise for what it has taught me."

She looked on him strangely for this speech.

"I can't understand you, Harry," she said. Her love was for the fragrant greens, and she could not understand the royal purples of the earth.

"What I mean is this, I'm the better husband for you now than ever I was, because my feet are firm on experience! Experience of myself, experience of others, experience of the world. Surely that's the only meaning of this earth!"

"Then you might go on getting this experience, and what am I to do?" She spoke with a tone void of emotion.

His mind admitted the logic, but denied its truth. He drooped his eyes and was silent. Then she struck into the language of bitter jealousy; scourged herself with improbable happenings; brought herself almost

to a revulsion of him. He took the language of pained protest.

Strange world! Its inhabitants extol happiness as the most blessed of human states, and spend their days and endeavours raising impassable barriers between themselves and it. She was ineffably dear to him; he was vital to her thought; if she had him not in the flesh she created him in the spirit; yet they fought ghosts of the past, they raised improbable ghosts of the future, and waged a very anguish of battle over them. She haled them forth; he cried out on them as fiction; and their souls cried dumbly for peace and joy. It was Harry she wanted, not Rose; it was Rose he wanted, not Harry—truly so, despite the contrary seeming: and yet each cried out on the other because their sight was not the same!

Yet they had to work out their own salvation; and they talked themselves to a strained silence. His thought was nervous and frayed, but the silence cooled him. He rose on his feet, and, taking her by her hands, drew her up opposite him. Smoothing the hair back from her brow, he said—

"Rose, we love each other. That requires no proving. Whatever Love is, we have it. We need each other, don't we? Well; now we want faith in each other, faith in the other's divisible self. Probably that may not come easily, but it will be the better when it does come if we acquire it slowly. But the sooner we are together and united the sooner it will come. Therefore we ought never to part again."

She made no reply.

"You wouldn't like me to go again for ever, would you?" he asked.

She looked with sudden fear at him. He saw it, and was glad. She knew he saw it. He stooped and

she raised her lips to his. He knew it for a pledge of their reconciliation, though she did not know it so as yet.

"Can I stay here to-night, do you think?" he asked.

"Oh, no, no!" She shrank from the thought.

"But why not?" he asked, pained, disappointed.

"Let me have it my way," she urged. "Don't press it."

"I should like to speak to Mr. Bradley," he said.

"No, dear, don't! Let me decide, please, Harry! Go now, will you, and come back to-morrow?"

"But why this—this strangeness, this aloofness?" he asked, with rising annoyance in his voice. As he spoke he remembered his own resolve to patience and self-restraint, wishing he could withdraw his words.

"Oh, dear!" Distress sighed in her note.

"Very well, I'll go, dear heart," he said, attempting to speak with cheer. "I'll be back to-morrow."

"I only want to settle down to it," she said, looking up at him.

He caught her to him, and she clung eagerly to him in a responsive embrace.

When he had gone she sought out Mr. Bradley. She could not see him, but could hear the steady crunch of his footsteps in the far distance of a night-curtained garden. He heard her, too, and came to greet her down the path.

"I know," he said, anticipating her. "Is he here?"

"No; he's coming back to-morrow."

"You should have kept him here," he rebuked her.

"I couldn't," she said, and shivered.

He put his arm about her shoulders and drew her up the walk.

"Rose," said he, "you're a bundle of quick sensa-

tions, and they play on, and ruin, your nerves, and through your nerves they'll wreck your life. He's impulsive; and so between the two of you there's the very deuce to pay. I'll have you two married within a month; and then you can fight out your troubles at close quarters. That'll right you soon enough; and you are made for each other in many ways. In a month, I say; and don't struggle! No, nor argue! But what! Who is this?"

It was the neglected Jim. He had been stretched on a seat, surveying the sumptuous panoply of heavens. He had leapt to his feet at their approach.

## VI

WHEN Harry returned the following day—which he did as soon after dawn as decency permitted—it was a more self-possessed Rose that greeted him on the stair. Yesterday she was a quivering memory of the blow that had stung her months back in the gloom of a winter's dusk. To-day a new solicitude for him had been awakened in her. It was to both something softer and rarer, but of much the same zest, as the first high joy of love. Their bark of felicity floated through smoother sounds, on waters less full of tumult and revelry, than the rivers of unknown wonder it had travelled when first they were united passengers on it. The bright vivid landscapes of joy were now wide horizons of joy too calm to be wild. Yet as they sailed, it was a careful tiller he took. Sounds there were, reefs and ridges, that demanded navigation. These were to him sharp memories of earlier shipwreck; the more stringent for that, and a call to his utmost brain.

Memory of their separation, and the cause of it, they both avoided, even as they might have foreborne touching a sensitive wound. The wall of opposition had crumbled at a sight of eyes. Each rejoiced; but neither rejoiced openly. It was a subterrene topic.

Then as they walked the garden he broached the subject his mind was urgent with.

"Rose," said he, "do you mind if I ask you an awkward question?"

"What is it?" she asked, looking at him furtively.

"It's about your first great trouble." He spoke tenderly and, as it were, fearfully, for he noticed she shrunk at mention of the subject. "You know I have never mentioned it nor spoken of it. For one thing, it's nothing to do with me; and besides, I'm only too anxious that you should forget it. But would you mind telling me the name of—of—this man—that is to say—Jim's father?"

His very confusion made her to quiver with sensitiveness.

"I'd rather you didn't ask me, Harry," she said.

"My dearest own sweetheart, don't think I ask you out of mere curiosity. You know that, don't you?"

"But I'd rather you didn't mention the subject."

"I have a reason, dear."

"Oh, don't, dear! Don't let us talk about it!"

A little frankness on his side, he felt, would have discovered him what he wanted to know. But he could not twist himself to that necessary pitch of firmness. How much of his own timorousness produced this sensitiveness in her, he could not say. But it arose against him, forbidding any further discussion of the theme.

Yet the matter was awake in his mind, and he could

not rest till illumination had led to the action his mood demanded. So he turned later to Mr. Bradley.

"You know all the details of Rose's big trouble in Suffolk, don't you?" he asked.

"I didn't ask too much; but I naturally came to know most of it."

"Well, would you mind telling me the name of the man, Mr. Bradley?"

"But what does it matter at this time of day, Harry?"

Harry felt the prick of distrust in the question. Mr. Bradley's face, too, looked a perplexed query. In fact, he was wondering if Harry could be raising this as an attempt to get level their mutual failures. It seemed to him incredible that this could be so.

"You misunderstand me," said Harry sturdily; "but I have a reason for asking the question. It's a long tale, but briefly it is this. You know this money I have made?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have a fancy that one of the two is the man in question."

"What?"

"I think so. Let me tell you. I never really liked him, but he seems to have liked me from the first day we met. Well, you know, like begets like, and so I continued the friendship quite apart from the business relationship. Besides that, something indefinable attracted me to the man: he seemed strangely like somebody I knew. That haunted me—and partly also, I suppose, his being a Suffolk man, for, though Suffolk is not a small place, my interest in it is small, and one is apt to link interest with interest. He puzzled and worried me. It wasn't till I saw Jim yesterday that I realized what it was. I was going to lunch with this

man, and so I took Jim along with me. And then I saw the likeness between them. It was not a superficial likeness; but once seen it was startling. When I saw it, it was as though an unseen hand had struck me a blow. I couldn't trust myself to speak to him for some time. Then I got from him the fact that his country house was quite close to Ipstowe."

"The other man's name was Colquhoun, didn't you say once?"

"His full name is Webber-Colquhoun, Richard Webber-Colquhoun."

"Good heavens!"

"Then it is the same." Harry spoke grimly.

"And Jim lunched with him! Father and son! What an extraordinary thing!"

Harry made no reply. The subject nauseated him.

"And you made two thousand pounds through him!"

"By a swindle!" It was the explosion of nausea.

"Eh?"

"Yes, by a swindle; by a financial swindle that the law was privy to. It makes me sick."

"I don't follow you."

"The Candida concession had no oil; it was a fake. Oh Lord! to think I helped in it! The shares were wire-pulled up and down by this man Barras, and the gang—I, one of them!—sold at the top and bought at the bottom of the fluctuations. It's wound up now; but we were all told to sell out first, however. I've been making inquiries this past fortnight. I didn't think such things could be done, in my wild innocence. Why, one of the very men who lost scoffed at me when I suggested an inquiry. He said it would be bad

form! I suppose he hopes to make it level next time."

"Harry, what will you do with this money?" Mr. Bradley's eyes now flashed fire.

"Do? Why, return it to this lecher-swindler this very night, and leave him something in its place."

"Steady!"

"I don't want to be steady. I want to let myself go; it's my moral duty to do so."

"I feel indignant, too; but don't lose restraint on yourself."

"That's just what I want to do. There are times when it's necessary."

## VII

THAT night Webber-Colquhoun was sitting easily in his chair waiting. He had received a telegram earlier in the day from Harry informing him that he proposed calling that evening on an extremely urgent matter. Therefore he had stayed in, having wired to Gerald Barras asking that gentleman to call that evening. He trusted that by the time Harry got on to the awkward topic Barras would arrive, to extricate him from an awkward situation, and had adjusted the times accordingly.

Peaceful after-dinner emotions stirred in him as he regaled himself over a cigar. The world had dealt easily with him, and consequently he had cause for the eupeptic comfort that moved delightedly in his veins.

He had been annoyed at his previous day's altercation with Harry; annoyed, firstly, because it had distressed him and made him uncomfortable; secondly, because he liked Harry. Harry was healthy; and to



Webber-Colquhoun this was a zest in life. However, Barras would doubtless lay all those disturbances to rest with his customary deftness, after which, it was to be hoped, matters would flow smoothly and happily. Yes, he would ask Harry if he would go up to Scotland with him for the Twelfth. That would surely allay disquietude.

Yes, he liked that chap Denzil; and it was worth while putting oneself out a bit for one so cultured of thought and so thorough in his ways. Besides, he was obviously a gentleman. It was a matter of count, these days. One could not say so much of Barras.

In the midst of these peaceful reflections Harry broke on his loneliness.

"Ah, glad to see you, Denzil," said he; "very glad, believe me! Why didn't you leave your hat and coat in the hall?"

"I'll put them down here, if I may." As he spoke Harry bent in his hand a switch cane. His manner seemed determinedly negligent.

"Yes, do! Anywhere you like. I thought you disliked what you're pleased to call 'dandy canes.'"

"So I do. But they're useful sometimes. I bought this to-day."

"Well, if you're going to get married, you'll need it. They're the sort of thing for youngsters, I should think."

"I hope I should never be so brutal as to strike a child, least of all with a weapon. Now, a man!" Harry made the air sing with a fanciful stroke.

"My dear chap, you're a perfect monster. Put it down, for the Lord's sake, and come over to the fire."

Harry came over as he was requested to. His mood was excited, so he said nothing. Webber-Colquhoun felt the necessity of carrying the con-

versation over awkward silences, and continued—

"So you don't believe in castigation for children."

"No, I can't say I do."

"Finest thing out. I wouldn't care to do it much myself. But it's a thing that ought to be done when needed, as a sort of discipline."

"You seem to speak from experience."

"Good Lord, man! I'm not married."

"That doesn't always stop a man from having children."

"Now you're indelicate, Denzil. I must say I scarcely expected that sort of thing from you."

"But it's talk of the world, isn't it?"

"Still——!" A deprecatory hand concluded his meaning.

"But, say! what would you do if you found yourself saddled suddenly with the responsibility of a child?"

"You'll excuse me, but I'd rather not discuss that question."

"I see!"

"You came round, I think, to discuss the question of the Candida. So I have asked Barras to come round here to discuss the question with you. He knows more of the details than I do."

"I suppose it wasn't that you thought he would be better able to avoid the real issue than yourself."

"If you have determined to be unpleasant, I don't see much use in your staying." Webber-Colquhoun spoke with asperity.

"When did you say he would be here?"

"In half-an-hour's time or so."

"I don't think I'll be here so long." Webber-Colquhoun looked round with some surprise, but Harry went on, it must be confessed, more than a

little excitedly. "In fact, I brought round with me notes to the full amount of my illicit gains from you. For the sake of formality, I'll get you to sign this receipt."

Webber-Colquhoun thrust back his chair as he rose in his protest. He regarded Harry amazedly as he drew out from his pocket a bundle of bank-notes which he counted before him, placing a neatly typewritten receipt on the top of them, ready stamped for signature.

"Don't be a fool, man; don't be a fool! I don't want your money."

"It's because I don't wish it to be called or known as my money, that I return it. You'll find that precisely represents the amount of your original gift to me as juggled with since. It's over two thousand pounds now, as you know. You'll find on this paper an account of all the transactions that show how it burgeoned to this figure. Will you kindly sign the receipt?"

"Certainly not! I don't want your money." He thrust the pile of notes aside as he spoke, with an indignant gesture.

"Do I understand that you're so much of the cur that you will take my money without giving me a receipt?"

"You insult me. I don't want the money."

"I insist on leaving it. Will you sign the receipt?"

"Oh, very well! If you insist on doing a damned silly quixotic trick, I suppose I can't stop you." He seized a pen and scribbled his name hastily over his sovereign's physiognomy. "Now are you satisfied?"

Harry contemplated the signature, saying—

"You would have done better to have examined the

wording. It happens to exonerate me from all blame in the Candida swindle."

"Whatever it is, I've signed it. Now I think you had better go."

Harry went over to his coat and returned with his cane.

"There's one more matter I wanted to discuss with you."

"Well!"

"You said you have never had any children. That'll make it very difficult for you to understand my position. That little fellow you saw me with is the son of my fiancée, as I told you. She had never been married; that is to say, legally married, though I hope to remedy that in a very short while. I'm trying to find the father. Will you help me? You have money; and, as you see, I have none now."

"Certainly not! It's no business of mine. Besides that, you're more of a fool than I thought, taking on a girl like that."

"I'm sorry you won't. You see, you could help me greatly. The affair took place at Ipstowe."

The shaft seemed not to have struck Webber-Colquhoun, for his manner was negligent when he spoke.

"Oh!" said he.

"Yes, it was some years ago." Harry endeavoured to speak with calmness and incision, but his voice quivered with emotion. "Her name was Rose Foggetty."

Webber-Colquhoun looked puzzled. Time had erased names with him, and this one awoke no memories of itself. But Harry's manner of suppressed excitement indicated a strong personal feeling, for which it seemed difficult to account. Moreover, he was

bending his switch to and fro in an alarming manner. All which projected some considerable excitement into him. The atmosphere was electric, and conveyed uneasiness into his brain. It seemed something momentous hung over him. But he knew not what it was, and therefore knew not what reply to make.

"Damn it, man! haven't you got anything to say? Are you so grossly cynical as that? *His* name was Richard Webber."

Webber-Colquhoun paled suddenly, and leant back in his chair. There was something very like horror in his eyes.

"Good God!" he murmured, putting out his hand as though to ward off an intangible terror. "Good God!"

"Good God," Harry breathed in contempt. "How does it help the situation saying that? I've come with a judgment to pay, and that's why I brought this cane."

Webber-Colquhoun made no reply, but stared past Harry as though he had seen something that filled him with horror.

"Stand up and defend yourself."

Still the other made no move, and Harry found he had to maintain himself at fury by artificial whipping of his wrath.

"Stand up and defend yourself, and save me from the indignity of attacking a defenceless man the same as our judicature does." Harry touched the other lightly on the knee with his cane to arouse him to action.

"I can only say I'm sorry." Webber-Colquhoun rose erect as he spoke.

"That's only from you to me," said Harry, "not from you to the deed, as witness your remark a few

minutes ago that you thought I was a fool to take up with that sore of——” Revulsion seized Harry as he spoke, and with a swift movement he applied his cane to his opponent.

Stung with pain, Webber-Colquhoun sprung at Harry to wrest the cane from him. Harry was the stronger, however. Moreover, he had wrath on his side. He flung the other off, and leaping forward, bore him back over the chair on which he had lately been sitting. Then with a quick manipulation he spun him about, and applied the castigation.

The victim took his penalty like a man, and when Harry presently betook himself off, breathing fiercely, and flushed from his excitement and exercise, he contented himself with an oath that betrayed considerable emotion, and an emphatic threat to carry the issue to legal adjustment.

Rapidly Harry flew down the stairs, and when in the street without he ran into a man's arms. Apologizing hastily, Harry was about to turn away, when a voice exclaimed—

“'Pon my word, Denzil! By all that's wonderful!”

Looking round, he saw that it was Barras he had run into.

“Sorry. I can't stop. I'm in a hurry,” he said, and fled.

“Odd man, that chap Denzil! One of the squeamish kind,” muttered Barras, as he turned into the house.

To his considerable amazement he found his late partner striding up and down before the fire groaning heavily. On the table before him were strewn bank notes.

“Hullo! what's the matter?” he said cheerily and expansively. “I just met that chap Denzil outside.”

“Yes, damn him!” Webber-Colquhoun had his

hand applied to the tenderer portions of his anatomy, and his face expressed mingled anger and pain.

"Hullo! I thought you were such friends! Have you been falling out? And what the deuce are you twisting about like that for? In pain? You don't look very agreeable about it, anyhow."

"Oh, damn him! and damn you, Barras! Why the devil don't you clear out of it?"

"You're not mentally happy, that's evident. And you seem devilish uncomfortable physically. Bank-notes, too! Not further bribes, that the noble youth scorned to take?"

"Devil take you, Barras! Get out of it!"

"Well, you needn't be undignified about it, whatever it is."

"I'm not very well, and I want to be alone."

"Oh, very well! I'm only too delighted, I assure you."

Feeling very uncomfortable, Webber-Colquhoun went to his bed vowing legal penalties on Harry. He slept but fitfully, and with the first streak of dawn he was half awakened. His blind was fully drawn down, but being of some pale buff substance, it was gaily illuminated by the radiant sunlight without. It annoyed him this morning. He turned away from it, but no sooner was he asleep again than he turned thither once more. It was a blank page whereon was no writing; and it annoyed him.

Presently the shadow of some distant bulbous ornamentation floated across it. Gently it swam about on the smooth buff surface as the blind was blown to and fro, steadily making its way from horizon to horizon. His restless eyes fell on it ever and anon; and though he turned away from it, yet it seemed scarcely a moment before he would be gazing on it again. Even

when his eyes were closed he saw it swaying to and fro before his brain.

Then it seemed changed. It grew like an old man's bald crown, tufted with an encircling fringe of grey hair. It wrung a wildly familiar and morbid pity from him to see age thus in futile drudgery, for the parts of the picture filled in, and he saw this ancient head bowed patiently over an enormous tome, writing in it what would never be concluded. As it swayed to and fro it grew inexpressibly pitiful, for it seemed to totter with age. It plucked tearful chords in his breast, and harassed his dreams.

He saw himself, younger and gayer it seemed, bowed in pathetic interest over the toil of the ancient head. Then it all passed, and he saw instead an avenging Harry, with a huge and sinister rod and wild-gleaming eyes. He shrank from the picture. It, too, passed, with a swift erasure. The old picture came back, of the swaying grey head and himself bent tenderly over it. To it was now added an avenging Harry, clad in marvellous raiment, chastising him for having set this feeble form its weary drudgery. He shrank in horror from the revelation. He shuddered with unutterable revulsion, and as he turned quickly away he seemed to feel the lash about him. It woke him; and he lay thinking over it. Even now, awake though he was, he seemed to be pleading with Harry in a self-accusing self-defence.

Then he fell to drowsy slumber again. Once more the phantasy coiled through his brain, but now with a cunning difference. His pitying self and an avenging angel were purged from the picture, and the head was bowed over his toil through an eternity of gloom. Presently it looked up; and its face was Harry's. Horror hypnotized his limbs, for the hand ceased from its



toil, and, reaching forth, flung a bunch of bank-notes at his feet. A look of unspeakable scorn crossed over the face as it bent to its toil again. He dared not give it his pity: the bank-notes at his feet mocked him.

He found himself awake in a trance of terror. He gazed over at the blind for the bulbous shadow. It was gone, and the buff serenity was undisturbed.

He sprung out of bed, and as he did so he cried out with pain. Recollection of its cause brought a resonant anathema of Harry to his lips; but no sooner was it uttered than its sound rebuked him. As he tenderly felt his bruises memory of his dreams came on him. He had long since emptied out a stultifying emotion from his life; but shreds of it clung about his soul in the form of sentimentalism. In lieu of its bigger, purer self it began to work on him; and grew more buxom thereby. The figure of his dreams haunted him, and he avoided looking at the bank-notes he had brought in and placed on his dressing-table. He grew to a sudden resolve.

The effort of attiring sorely bruised limbs well-nigh ruined his determination. But he clung to it desperately, almost doggedly. Quickly, even agitatedly, he made his way into the other room and wrote a letter of apology to Harry. Sealing and stamping it, he sent it off immediately to an irretractable post. This done, he avoided thinking of it.

## VIII

GLOWING with his recent exercise, Harry made his way to Battersby's flat. As the blood flowed richly in his veins his thought enthused over the castigation he

had meted out. The day was that of Battersby's one remission from night labour, and therefore that gentleman was in to hail the avenging victor.

"You look warm," said he.

"I feel warm," came the reply.

"'Tis a bit sultry."

"I've had some sultry work."

"Oh!"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry, switching his cane about.

"Put the murderous weapon down, my dear man, and sit down like a peaceable Christian, for God's sake!"

"Yes, I've had sultry work."

"So I gather. Anyhow, it's pleasing to see a little zest in your eye. I began to despair of you lately."

"I've got a lot to tell you."

"Fire ahead! I'm one large ear."

"First of all, the Candida had no oil."

"I saw it was wound up the other day, and I drew my own conclusions. But I don't see that it's anything to be gleeful about."

"No; perhaps not!"

"I could wish you were a little less gnomic."

"I find out that Barras is an expert in this kind of thing, and has done it systematically for years. He knows exactly how far to go."

"Oh!"

"Yes. Or, in other words, I made two thousand odd pounds in pure highway robbery with the law's connivance."

"I shouldn't be too finical on that point."

"I've just taken it back in crisp Bank of England notes, and given it back to my pure-minded benefactor——"

"Fudge!"

"Fact! With a bit more besides of a different sort."

Battersby regarded the glowing face of his friend pensively awhile before he spoke. Then he said—

"I don't agree with it. I believe in spoiling the Philistines—or Egyptians, was it? Egyptians, that's it. I believe in spoiling the Egyptians. It's an honest man's duty. You've given them further power for evil, in other words; whereas in your hands the money would have been used to good effect. It savours too much of quixotry for health. It was unwisely done."

"Maybe. But I was clearing my own blame in the matter. In fact, I've got a receipt in my pocket in which he declares, over his signature, that I am exonerated in the Candida swindle, being led to assume that it was a sound and true concern."

"I suppose that's worth more than two thousand to you if you cared to make use of it."

Harry snorted in contempt.

"But that's not all," said he. "I've given that chap Webber-Colquhoun the cleanest castigation I've ever seen or heard of." Harry took up his cane, and swung it about in memory of his achievement.

"No."

"Yes."

"You'll have the law on you."

"I suppose I will—for being an agent of justice. I don't care."

"I don't like it, old chap." Battersby rose as he spoke, and strode about the room.

"Why?" Harry's tone was defiant.

"It's emphasis; and I don't like emphasis. Emphasis leads to revulsion, and is a kind of disbelief."

"Nonsense, man!"

"It is: you think it over. Your own tone implies it. Haven't you ever noticed in your experience that if ever you have given your emphatic opinion on a subject that it's on that very subject your opinion is most apt to change? It's one of the most familiar things in experience: history is full of it. People call it Nemesis; but it's not: it's the logic of psychology. Your emphasis was born of a lack of real conviction, which led after to a change of attitude. The men that change most are the men that are most dogmatic, because their very dogmatism is a contention with themselves."

"You're getting beautifully paradoxical."

Battersby stopped in his perambulation, and looked at Harry.

"It's unlike you, Denzil," he said, "to try and knock a man down with a name. Paradox or not, isn't it true? You look over the men you know. Why, I could give you several straight off."

Harry returned Battersby's look steadily; and as he did so it dawned on him that the castigation he had dealt out was not for the reason he had stated at all; but for another reason impossible to state. It seemed alarming to him that he could so entirely have deluded himself into the excitement of such an assumption. He felt an aversion to continuing the subject.

"Oh, I admit there's much in what you say; only it's not all."

"On the other hand," came the response, "there's much that makes us proud of manhood in what you did." He seated himself again. "Now I call that a chivalrous interchange." He looked whimsically over at Harry.

"I met Rose the other day," said Harry, a silence having wrapped them awhile.

"Really?" said Battersby, and the single word was charged with eager inquiry.

"Yes; it's all settled between us."

"I am glad to hear it, old chap; very glad. My congratulations." He stretched over his hand.

"I knew if I met her I could soon settle the miserable affair," Harry said, closing his own in the proffered hand.

"It was strange how we met," Harry continued, and he spun the tale before Battersby's attention. It was a brief tale that he told; a tale of deletions, for its chiefest interest to him it was impossible to give Battersby.

## IX

MR. BRADLEY had sped from one extreme to another. During these months he had read the calamity they contained as Time's rebuke to his philosophy. He never spoke of Harry to Rose, for she wilted at the subject as at a scourge. But he knew that even her seeming conviction of mind was a low muffled cry for Harry, not the less plaintive for being swathed in the efforts of her will. As for Harry, he could only imagine how he suffered. And seeing that the appeal was to the imagination it was the more poignant for that.

He had felt partly responsible for all this pain. Therefore, now that Harry was returned, now that love had returned to its own, very touching in its hesitations and shyness, he was determined to put the whole matter forthwith to the issue of marriage.

He spoke to Rose, but found her very sensitive and tender on the subject. He could see that a voice in her cried eagerly in favour of the proposal; but an-

other voice spoke against it, and in the controversy so awakened she grew fearful. He therefore added the voice of authority to the plaintive in the case, and left the issue to resolve itself so.

He spoke to Harry.

"Yes, Mr. Bradley, I agree with you," came the response. "I'll have a talk with Rose."

Mr. Bradley said nothing of having already spoken with her, for he thought this eager youth might quickly take umbrage at so dire an interposition of authority in the ways of lovers. He breathed a prayer heavenward in half humour that Rose might not let fall such indiscreet knowledge.

"We'll have to proceed simply enough, in all conscience," Harry went on. "I'm not the capitalist I was yesterday."

"Oh, how did you get on?"

"I gave him all his cash back, and a good whipping beside."

"I don't like to think of it, my boy."

"I must admit, nor do I. But that's worth reading." Harry displayed his receipt.

"I'm glad you gave the money back," said Mr. Bradley then, suggesting suspicion of the other by inference. "As to a matter of money, I wish Rose and yourself would stay here. I'm an old fogey," he went on hastily, "and I don't suppose I shall last out much longer. I should make over everything to both of you jointly, and live as your guest."

Harry had toyed before his eyes a gentle picture of two rooms in which Rose and himself were to do battle with adversity. It had beckoned him bewitchingly through indefiniteness and obscurity. This present proposal, with its comparative munificence, robbed him of the heroic, and was unwelcome. It robbed him of

the emotion of a nomad, too, and was doubly unwelcome. But it was impossible to breathe even so much as a zephyr of opposition to it, so pathetically, generously, and graciously had it been put.

Rose came in to baulk further discussion, and Mr. Bradley, waving the flimsiest excuse, fled the scene.

In the interlude of love-like caresses Harry whispered his scheme.

"Has father been speaking to you?" asked she, a quick loyalty to him alight in her to think that even one so close as Mr. Bradley should speak with Harry on a matter that concerned her and him alone.

"I spoke of it to him," replied Harry, catching her thought. "He asks us to live here, he to be our guest."

She was caught unsuspectingly to an assumption of the fact.

"I would rather we were alone, dear," she said.

"So would I! But you wouldn't have us leave him?"

"Oh, no, no!" she responded, refusing that picture also.

"We'll arrange about it to-morrow. We've already missed one day." The peal of bells through the air reminded him.

"Must it be so soon?" she cried, in fear of such proximity.

"Why wait, dear heart? My life's a bit lonely."

It was a meretricious plea, but failed not to touch her sympathy and womanly soul. What was lacking to win was more than half-won thereby. She put up a last quavering fight.

"Don't hurry me, dear! You won't, will you? You see I'd rather settle down to it slowly."

Harry winced at this. He stood to it, however.

"It's bound to be best part of a month, anyhow," said he. The tactician in him whispered that it was well not to seek reaction by over exhortation; and so, firmly though reluctantly, he called off his hounds of argument and entreaty.

It was not easy, however, to school his soul to patience, and he lay tossing that night, therefore, thinking how best he could marshal his forces so that he might win by strategy what he seemed like to fail by straight assault. When he awoke the following morning the gaiety of sunlight mocked at his fears, and apostrophizing a photographic Rose he hailed her will as divine. Therewith, though he knew it not, the issue was won for him. Nothing could more surely have won him her will, than the concession of his. And it proved itself so in the fact.

With disquietude he saw an envelope greeting him at his breakfast table bearing Webber-Colquhoun's penmanship. He avoided it, and read the others first. Finally it had to be read. As his eye travelled over it, however, his face expressed extreme astonishment. It was worded thus—

"DEAR MR. DENZIL—

"It seems to me, in spite of your extraordinary conduct of last evening, that I owe you an apology. I cannot think your action was well advised, as it could only introduce bad blood into a distressing state of affairs. I fail to see whom it could benefit, or what good it could achieve; to say nothing of its being a most undignified procedure.

"But my thoughts make it clear to me that I owe you an apology; and I do so. Perhaps, after all, as things have turned out, they are better as they are, as I am not fitted by nature for married life. I trust



you will not judge me as indelicate if I observe that it fills me with very strange emotions when I think of my son addressing you as father. I feel diffident, too, when I contemplate your maintenance of him. I suppose it must be so. There is much that I would care to know: but I must not ask. Nor, I fear, can I ask you to let me see him, though I would naturally very much like to. I hope, however, you will permit me to make a settlement on him.

"As to your views on the Candida: I think they are impossible. If they were adopted how could the City be maintained? They strike at the root of Society. I propose giving the money you returned to a hospital in your name.

"I do not wish to injure your susceptibilities, but I feel compelled to say that I wish you would regard me at your disposal for any proposal you might wish to carry out. The competition of life must be a terrible thing; and a penurious old age is a terrible thing to think about. Some charity or other ought to step in to stop it.

"Let me add my apology for a wrong that has caused me some uneasy moments; and my very great desire to see my son. I hope you will grant me this latter wish.

"I am,

"Yours sincerely,

"R. WEBBER-COLQUHOUN.

"P. S.—I wish you every joy in your future married life. You are better adapted to it than I should be."

Harry read through this twice, and then regarding it whimsically, he muttered—

"Habet!"

Then his astonishment died away; and as he took

the man in mental review he perceived that such a letter was in no way out of keeping with his character. Tossing it on the table, he addressed it—

“Well, anyhow, you prove that the shreds of sentiment are healthier in a man than no emotion at all. Barras, at least, could not have written you. Therefore a whipping would be spoilt on him: he requires simply eternal extinction, because he has gone over to the tigers. Well, I suppose I’ve got to reply to you.”

He answered it forthwith, for already paragraphs of a letter were leaping through his mind. Then he sent it off in the following terms—

“DEAR MR. WEBBER-COLQUHOUN—

“I am obliged to you for your letter. Whether my action was justified as owing to you, I cannot well say, and it might be impertinent to inquire. Your letter seems to drive me to that opinion, for I cannot conceive of its being written anterior to such an action. It was at least owing to me; it was, I think, decidedly owing to the girl I honour and esteem (she does not know I have met you; nor will know); and it seems to me emphatically owing to an ærial yet undeniable sense of justice. You may contend that justice is not punitive but salutary. In which case, as I have said, your letter seems my sufficient justification. I thank you for your letter. I can hope that it is no dislocated and unrelated apology, but that it is, indeed, the expression of a recognition of the duty each one of us owes to the consequences of our deeds. Such a recognition is the whole context of Honour: without it, Honour is but a cant phrase. Forgive my didacticism.

“Whom you may desire to benefit out of your exchequer is, of course, no business of mine. You must permit me courteously to decline to have my name

linked with it. My views as to the Candida are most emphatic. I am deeply interested as to your searching criticism of Society, and its ally and generator, Commerce. Permit me, in a recession of didacticism, to point out to you that the phrase 'the competition of life' is a much misunderstood one, and should in no way be confused with the competition of commercial conditions. One is divine and therefore healthy. The other is rapsallion and therefore brutal and degrading. The confusion of this is the confusion of much in present thinking.

"As to my step-son (soon to be), I know his mother's frame of mind too well to think of it. I fear she would think his contact with you degrading to him. I do not wish to be harsh.

"Again I thank you for your letter. I can readily understand that it took some courage to write.

"Believe me,

"Yours faithfully,

"HENRY DENZIL."

Having sent it, he mused in his memory some of its phrases, following out in his thoughts many of the themes it had raised in his mind.

He did not realize, however, that in Webber-Colquhoun's mind had arisen an extraordinary overwhelming desire to see and speak with his son. He bore the picture of his face continually in his mind, as it had been fixed on him wonderingly at a lunch that became memorable to him. At times the wish to see him seemed uncontrollable, and it was with difficulty he restrained the idea of following him out, which was now not difficult to do, seeing he had Harry for clue. Moreover, as time passed, the desire grew more strenuous; grew strenuous, indeed, with baulking; waxing

to the fiercer vigour because its fulfilment was so aloof, and yet withal so temptingly near.

## X

WINNING a consent from Rose for immediate action seemed the least of the difficulties. Harry shuddered at the thought of suburban regalia and ostentation. Rose agreed heartily, and desired a reclusive and simple marching through legalities. Mr. Bradley, however, while agreeing with some heartiness as to the registry proposal, seemed to think that some festivities should mark the event. He did not say it boldly, but he felt that such a thing was owing to his gardening cronies.

The opposition was vital. For the first proposal contemplated a swift sealing of the marital bond at Chelsea, followed by a surreptitious flight for the open country. There seemed a charm in this to Harry; as also to Rose. Whereas the latter proposal argued for the registry office that claimed Streatham. Moreover, the ordeal of festivities seemed terrible to both.

At length Harry suggested that, instead of debating the subject, he and Rose should reconnoitre at both registry offices.

"We might at least see which is the cleaner and more wholesome," said he.

When they returned it was with dejected countenances.

"Well," said Mr. Bradley, "how went it?"

Neither Harry nor Rose could summon a smile.

"I don't much agree with the archiepiscopal view of life, I must say," Harry declared; "but, on my life,

the civic ceremony is enough to make one an arch ritualist for life."

"They're not very comely places, by all accounts," said Mr. Bradley.

Rose shuddered.

"It was horrible," said she.

Mr. Bradley desired information as to how events had proceeded with them.

"First of all we went to the place down here. I suppose it's only natural that they should choose the most populous site, and therefore, by consequence, the most unwholesome and depressing sight. The whole place looked forbidding and undesirable."

"It was only Harry that made me go in. It was horrible." Rose interposed her disgust.

"Anyhow, we went in and saw the sacred ceremonial at work. I thought it was the adjudication of criminals at first. The couples looked like it; their manner was that of culprits, and their faces were mostly sordid. Certainly the official looked like it; he had just that pugilistic cast of countenance that most of our justiciaries acquire. The place was dingy and gloomy; and—well, we fled."

Mr. Bradley saw disappointment awaiting his ancient friends.

"Was yours any better?" he asked.

"Worse!" The gloomy monosyllable fell from Rose.

"Far worse!" Harry took it up. "The people were better, but the place was worse. But, I say, what a lot of it goes on!"

"A lot of what?" It was Mr. Bradley that asked, hope reviving in him.

"Marrying!" Harry's astonishment seemed ingenuous and genuine.

It recovered Rose from gloom. She laughed out—  
“Why, of course, you goose! People are always marrying.”

“It’s prodigious, isn’t it?” It seemed to have smitten Harry as a vision might have. “When you come to contemplate the size of London, and its daily toll of marriages—it’s—it’s crushing.” He looked at Rose with a whimsicality that was almost pathetic. “I should like to feel the day I married you that we were the only two on the wide earth marrying. But this looks too like a machine. It’s—it’s crushing, that’s the only word for it. It’s terrible, too!”

“You shouldn’t think about these things,” said Rose.

“Most admirable advice!” echoed Mr. Bradley.  
“But what have you decided to do?” he asked.

“I rather like the thought of flowers, now.” Harry looked over to Rose as he spoke.

“Flowers, yes, but not a function,” she cried.

Mr. Bradley’s face fell; seeing which she went over to him, and, putting her face beside his, crooned to him—

“You silly old man, we shall have it just as you please. Eh, Harry?”

“Right!” cried Harry, “and I think I should like it.”

“No, no!” cried Mr. Bradley.

“Yes,” came the emphasis from Harry. “Marriage is a sacrament, it must needs be; and therefore its significance is necessarily religious. Of course civic rites can’t recognize this, it’s out of their function at once. I’m glad I went to those offices to-day. It has taught me a few things.”

Thus in the early days of September, to Mr. Bradley’s inexpressible joy, there fell a gala of festivities in celebration of a plighted bond betwixt Harry Denzil,

bachelor, and Rose Foggetty, spinster. Mr. Bradley had paid earnest visits to, and had had prolonged conversations with, the local canonical authority in order that the spinsterhood of Rose Foggetty should be treated with the necessary deftness. He was a euphonic and complacent person, buxom with this world's goods, and was won to acquiescence with not much difficulty.

Prior to the function there had been earnest disputations as to a difficult theme. Mr. Bradley thought that both Harry and Rose should write and acquaint their respective fathers of the coming event. Both avowed the utmost aversion to this. They both embarrassed him by claiming him in the paternal office. Yet he had insisted, winning his point at the very point of the argumentative sword.

It was not until the honeymoon holiday that Mr. Foggetty's reply had come to hand. It contained only brief good wishes, and some godly counsel which was rather hinted at than roundly declared. This very element of hesitancy seemed strangely pathetic to Rose, and a further pathetic interest was afforded by a certain greyness in its phrasing. It hinted of shaken faith owing to declining fortunes, and, probably, a consequent falling off in the esteem of others.

From Dr. Denzil came no reply. Though Harry expected none, it angered him nevertheless. A messenger, however, on the very morning of the day, brought up a parcel, which, on opening, Harry perceived to be a token from Cicely. It moved him deeply. In the bustle of the occasion it was forgotten.

Battersby served Harry as lieutenant for the occasion. As they stood beneath a crest of nodding lilies undergoing the painful ordeal of surveying the guests

and the curious, Harry's eyes grew round with wonder to see a face he knew.

"Battersby, old chap," he whispered, "there's my sister. Good old Cicely! She has got some stuff in her, after all."

When Rose stood beside him, he whispered again—

"Do you know Cicely's here?" but met only a frown that evinced disapproval at the introduction of such a mundane theme. Whereat, thrown in upon itself, his mind took up the cry, blotting out the priestly intonation that had begun, "Good old Cicely!"

"I bothered father into letting me come," said Cicely afterwards. "Of course I couldn't be away. I'll come down to see you afterwards, if I may."

"Of course."

"Father doesn't like it, but he isn't going to rule my life always. Doesn't Rose look pretty?"

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, very. I congratulate you, and wish you joy and all that sort of thing. I should like to talk to her."

Harry whispered to Rose, then watched them as they talked. He noticed that Rose thawed but slowly. He noticed, too, that Cicely paid no heed to aloofness, but won it away by an accumulation of graciousness. "Proud little wife!" he thought, and then took up the last word and whispered it to himself, finding curious music resident in it. As Rose melted to open frankness of smiles, he detached himself to seek Jim.

He found him in tears.

"Grandfather says you're going away with mother," he complained, being exhorted to tell his grief.

"Yes, for a short while, to come back for good. Isn't that good enough for you?"

Harry to Jim was a tonic, and it was, doubtless,



therefore that he won such attachment from him. He was this now. The raindrops scattered before the wind, and a sunshine dawned through the gloom.

"Will you always be here, then?"

"Yes, always."

"I shall like that."

## XI

THE relation of this history falls to a close. It is an ancient cynicism that faults a history for a conclusion with the reverberation of marriage bells, saying that marriage bells are the concussion of tragedy, or at best a peal of warning for a series of concussions to be induced thereafter. Such a cynicism, if it mean only that the life indicated has more likelihood of dramatic interest than the life dealt with, is true in its human philosophy, as multitudes arise to testify. But it sadly lacks in its artistic philosophy. It is true that the history may chance to fail on the threshold of the deeper interest, but it need not be so true that it has failed to conclude its sequence.

The human history never closes. Neither does it conclude in the corporate, nor, a suffering humanity insists with its latest breath of hope, does it conclude in the individual, sense. It is a boundless ocean of wave leading to wave, waves born of waves. But an artistic history both begins and concludes, its conclusion sounding the last word of the sentence begun with its first event. Artistic architectonics rest on this fact. An artistic history is, in short, a wave picked from the ocean, its last fall concluding its first impulse. Everything thereafter is a fresh wave, a fresh history. It may derive from the earlier wave, but its relation is

a separate theme, not to be confusion with the earlier on pain of artistic incohesion.

Resting on this fact, there scarcely remains much to tell.

A far felicity beckoned Rose and Harry. It lay with them to achieve it slowly—painfully, if need be: it was not brought to them in mystic sort by the interchange of plain gold rings. On their return to Streatham the process began, and it was marked by heights of exuberant joy and depths of depression and discomfort. He was to acquire gentleness in the process, and she strength: that they might thus stand completer in themselves for being completer in each other.

As for Mr. Bradley he shrank away, leaving them to themselves. For awhile they suffered it unknowingly, scarcely perceiving that they were so much alone. Then they joined in a hearty raid on him. Lovers are ever selfish, and therein they fail in the chief point of exuberant youth. They had incurred so fell a charge in the past only too frequently: which is not a thing to murmur at but to see and acknowledge. We do not grumble that the throstle's song is not the same as the nightingale's. But now they made amends. In nothing were they so much in concert as in tending his comforts and in seeking his interests. It was not so much a virtue in them, as it was an advantage to them, giving them an initial unity of effort. Being now not so filled with the insatiable hunger that the absence of the other created, they found room in their thoughts for the gentler amenities of life. The burning quest had declined from fury, and their souls expanded in plenteousness.

Jim, too, shared in this. Joining now the ranks of ordinary childhood in the possession of a father he even began to make friends. Harry encouraged him

in this. But the friendships so kindled were not of long endurance, and their disruption discovered a fact in Jim that had else lain undreamt of. It was the faculty of anger. Not mere anger, but a fierce sudden fury that in its very display burnt out interest in whoever had caused it. The most noteworthy and significant occasion was in his first tentative friendship.

It was in the early autumn. He had gone out with his comrade to an adjacent field of recreation, and had returned abruptly, seizing a book uncommunicatively. Both Rose and Mr. Bradley sought to extract the reason of his taciturnity: but vainly. Then, following her usual policy (a policy, be it said, extracted from the experiences of her own desires), Rose had left him to himself, to pass through the gloom of his mind. But a letter brought round from his late playmate's mother informed her, in indignant language and agitated concern, that her immaculate son had been fiercely and wantonly set upon by Rose's villainish offspring and smitten to the earth, and left there to recover as best he might from so cowardly an assault. As the other youth overtopped Jim by a head and more, and as Jim was scarcely athletic of build, Rose marvelled. But she could not extract anything from her small and studious brigand. Harry was appealed to, being brought down from his work. Yet even his interrogatory failed awhile. At length Harry said—

“Did he say anything that made you angry?”

Jim's eyes revealed that the cause had been searched, but his lips said nothing.

“Come now, old chap, tell me what he said? He probably deserved it if you gave it to him, Jim; so I'm not angry. But I want to know.”

Jim's eyes flooded with tears, and in a rushing tide the information came forth—

"He said you weren't my father."

"Did he?" Harry's soul flinched at the naked statement, and then flushed to pity of this little quivering parcel of humanity.

"I told him he was a liar. He said his mother told him it was impossible because you had only just married mother, that I had no father."

"So you struck him."

"Yes, lots of times, and a policeman pulled me off, and I came home. You are my father, aren't you?"

"Of course I am."

Harry had replied to the irate letter with the information that he "fully approved of the castigation that had been dealt out to a retailer of his mischievous parent's mischievous conversation." And he took the keenest delight the following day in seeing a certain daintily chiselled nose turned heavenward in contempt of him.

Despite this disastrous beginning Jim continued to make friends, for Harry encouraged him to it. He took a deep and keen interest in his protégé-son's mental progress, the more so because he feared for his future. His introspection showed him that he himself was too quick to suffer in this world; as was also his wife; though neither of them was a tithe as sensitive as Jim. In action and reaction it made him strange in his ways, and this strangeness made him yet more sensitive.

Webber-Colquhoun seemed blotted out of Harry's mind. He would have been considerably perturbed to learn that Webber-Colquhoun had lately haunted Streatham, and had actually witnessed Jim's prowess over the young gossip-monger.

The winter searched Mr. Bradley. It came in rain and storm and kept him in continual huskiness. Nor

would he seek relief by flying its rigours. At length it searched and shook him so that he had perforce to fly. Yet, even then, he would not go far, contenting himself with Winmouth.

While he was there, in the opening months of the year, the winter culminated in sudden and frosty rigours. As reports proclaimed this to be universal, Harry and Rose feared for Mr. Bradley. She determined to go down to tend him. But before she could translate her decision to practice he had returned, obviously in the throes of congestion. Months of anxiety supervened. Rose and Harry tended him continually, and his joy in their physical presence was the only strand in his clasp by which he kept fast hold of life. The spring brought him relief, but it brought the calamity that crushed him.

With the advent of brighter days Jim had been released to the liberty of the open-air playing ground that lay handy. Harry would often be with him, for the development of Jim's mind began to have an absorbing interest for him.

Once, as he sat working, restiveness was in his blood. The sunshine falling over the snowy splendour of an apple-tree in full bloom taunted him and tempted him. He contented himself for a while with feasting his eyes richly upon it, but soon a gentle wind bore to his ears the silvery laughter of children at play. It was too much. He tossed his work aside, and went out to find Rose.

"Come," said he, "it's too rich a day to waste. Let us go and find Jim for a romp."

"I've been itching," said she, "to go and dig you out."

Out they went, happily and gaily. The clouds that sped across the blue seemed by mysterious chance to

avoid the sun, and the golden tide of his splendour was unbroken. Birds were in full song, and flowers, bloom and leaf made the scene jocund and enchanting to the eye. But when they reached the common no Jim could they find. They searched for him carelessly awhile, enjoying each other happily. Then their perturbation and unrest blotted out the effulgence of the day.

Everywhere they searched, but could not find him. Then, chiding him to each other, they returned to await him. Hours passed by, and he did not come. Anxiety raised an unhealthy flush to Mr. Bradley's cheek, but did not cause the truant to return.

Anxiety had reached its zenith in the evening when a ring came at the bell and a knock fell on the door. Harry was first at the door, but Rose was not far behind him. Terror came on them to behold a blue-arrayed constable, who informed them—

"Nothing to be alarmed at, but we've got a little man round the corner that belongs here, I think. He's just a bit hurt, met with accident. We'll bring him round."

The sound of heavy feet in the hall made Mr. Bradley cry out to learn what was the matter. On learning that Jim was being brought in unconscious on a stretcher, his lips closed tightly, and he slid forward in his chair. They had a second patient in their care.

It was some days before it was even possible to question Jim, and Harry was glad afterwards that it was he who had essayed the task.

"It was that man I saw the day you met mother," said he.

Webber-Colquhoun! Harry restrained himself, and sought to learn the tale coherently.

"He came to play with me," said Jim in response

to Harry's question, "and I told him to go away because you didn't like him. But he said that you and he were friends now. He asked me to go and help him buy some cakes."

"And did you?"

"Yes, father. We went in a carriage a long long way, and I began to be afraid. He kept on kissing me. You're not angry, are you, father?"

"No, Jim, no!"

"Then why do you look like that?"

"I'm a little angry with the man, laddie, but go on!"

"I was afraid. I didn't like him kissing me. I thought, and I thought, till it hurt me. Then I told him I would like to buy the sweets *now*. So he stopped the carriage and we got out. You're not crying, father, are you?"

"No, boy, go on, old chap!"

"While we were in the shop I ran out when he wasn't looking. I ran, and I ran, and I ran. Then something hit me and it hurt me so; and then I was here with mother and you."

He had been run over running away from his father. As the mists gathered before Harry's eyes it seemed to him like the dark mysterious handwriting of Fate on the scroll of life.

When he told Rose the story he told her, too, who it was had thought to capture him, how he came to meet him, with all the rest that he had not spoken of hitherto, and he saw her face set hard and cold.

Sternly they fought the Arch-Dread, but the little life slipped away from their hold. He seemed quiescently happy as the tide of life ebbed from him, contented supremely if only Rose and Harry were there with him. His great eyes followed them gravely about the room. Now and then he would murmur for

one or other of them, but it was only for a clasp of hands.

Summer was young, and the day was joyous without, when his life was gently erased from the page of the living. Stricken Mr. Bradley was in the room, and his eyes passed from one to the other of the three of them. They dwelt last on Harry, and a smile flickered contently on his face as they closed peacefully. Harry had hold of his hand, and presently as he leaned over the face and kissed it, a great sob broke on him. Rose knelt by the bedside, and Mr. Bradley went out to hide his tears.

They found him presently in his favourite chair asleep or unconscious. In less than a week his life, too, had fled.

## XII

A THROSTLE gave out his broken earnest song swaying on a twig at the far end of the garden, and a large grave summer evening was stealing over the earth. Into the dark room the music stole, hushing both of them as Rose buried a tear-stricken face on Harry's breast. He caressed her hair, then bent and kissed it.

"It's the old chapter finished, and the new one begins," said he. "My darling, my wife, we must leave here. We must be all in all to each other in the new chapter, dearest. Don't cry, dear! But it mustn't be here. Let's go back to dear old Chelsea for a start. Seeing old Battersby to-day reminded me of it."

So they turned to the way of nomads.





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